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THE NEW YORKER

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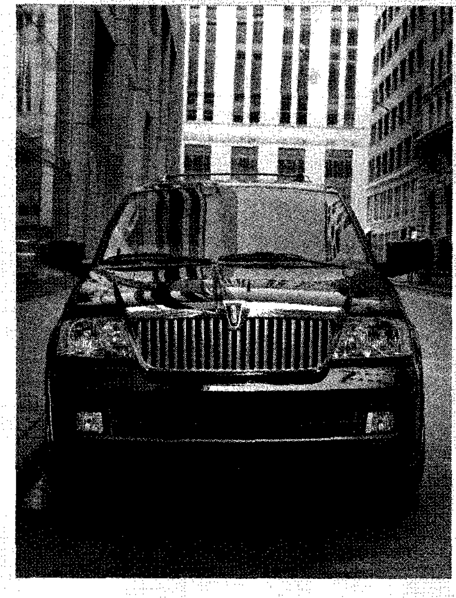

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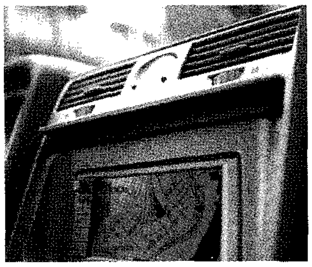

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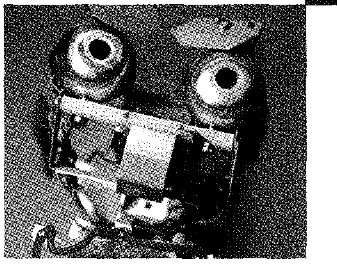
Helen Greiner
Chairman and co-founder,
iRobot Corporation.

Helen's views on robots driving on Mars but not Earth? *"On Mars, there are no Boston drivers. So maybe it's an easier environment that way."*



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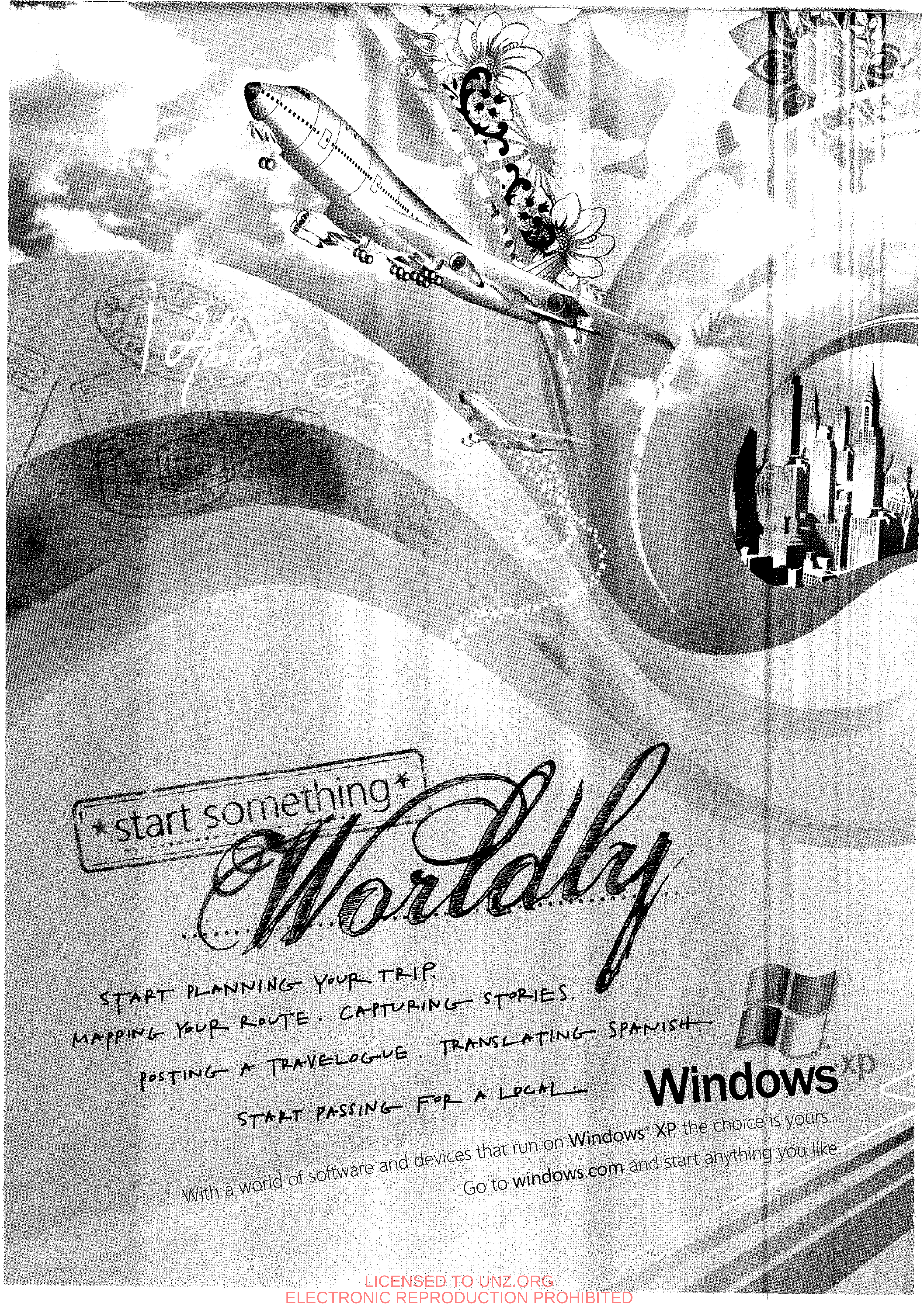
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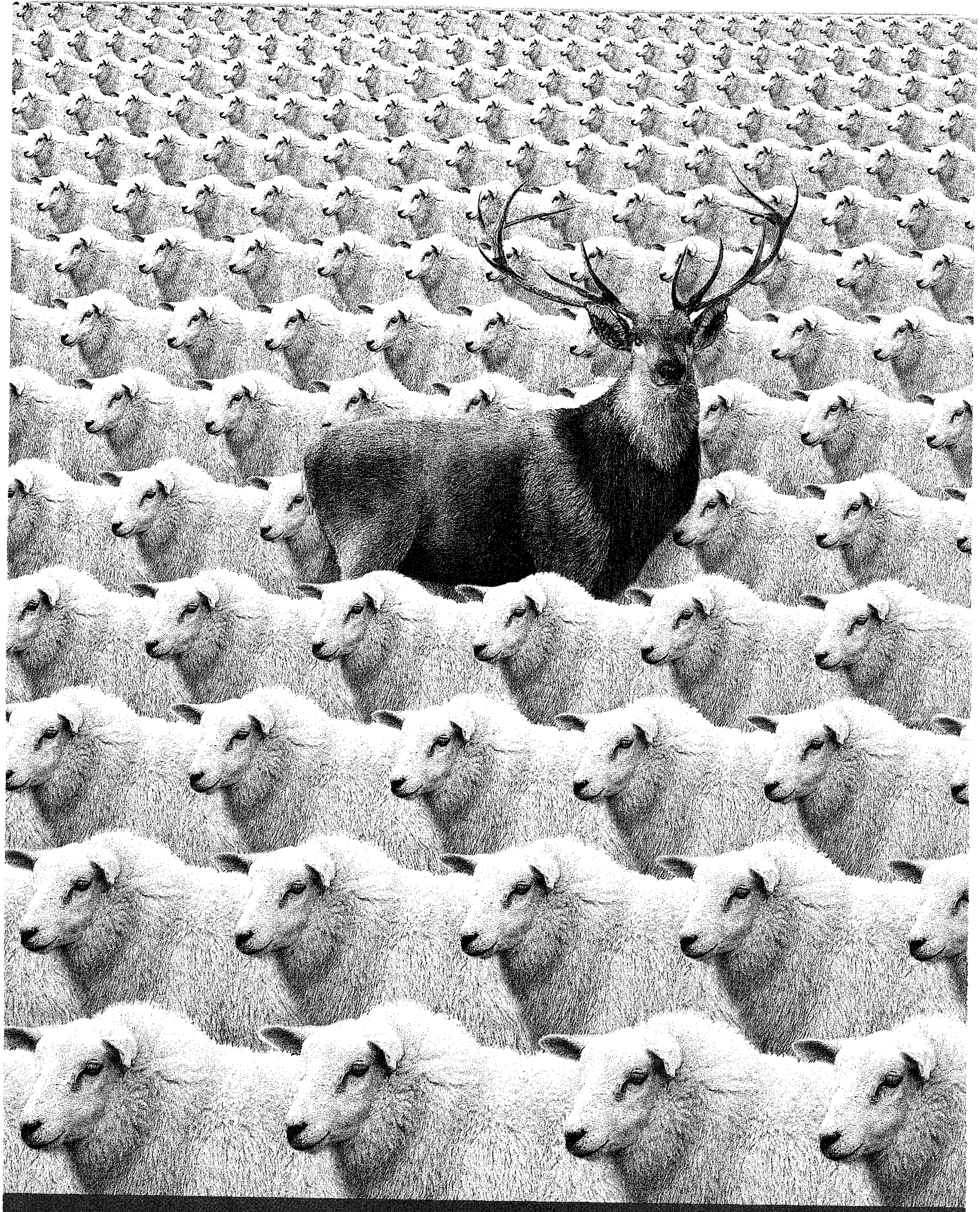

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THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 6, 2005

12 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
31 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Rebecca Mead on Laura Bush; an interfaith gathering in Brooklyn.

Margaret Talbot 38 ANNALS OF EDUCATION
Best in Class
What students will do to be valedictorian.
Paul Simms 44 SHOUTS & MURMURS
Talking Chimp Gives His First Press Conference
Elizabeth Kolbert 46 LETTER FROM ALASKA
Last Words
Can a dying language be saved?
Jon Lee Anderson 60 PROFILES
The Man in the Palace
Hamid Karzai's uncertain Presidency.
Jonathan Franzen 74 ANNALS OF ADOLESCENCE
The Retreat
Everybody wanted to be in the youth group.
Tessa Hadley 84 FICTION
"A Mouthful of Cut Glass"

THE CRITICS

Alex Ross 94 A CRITIC AT LARGE
Music and technology.
101 BOOKS
Briefly Noted
Joan Acocella 102 DANCING
Five new works at New York City Ballet.
John Lahr 104 THE THEATRE
"Terrorism," "The Argument," "Mortal Ladies Possessed."
Anthony Lane 106 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Cinderella Man," "The White Diamond."

POEMS

C.K. Williams 78 "Marina"
W. S. Merwin 98 "Just This"

COVER *"Real Estate Bubbles," by Christoph Niemann* DRAWINGS *Mike Twohy, William Hamilton, Eric Lewis, P.C. Vey, Michael Shaw, Barbara Smaller, Charles Barsotti, Jack Ziegler, Roz Chast, David Sipress, Matthew Diffee, Leo Cullum, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Michael Crawford, Lee Lorenz, J. B. Handelsman, Danny Shanahan, Frank Cotham, Edward Koren, Alex Gregory, Drew Dernavich* SPOTS *Benoît van Innis*

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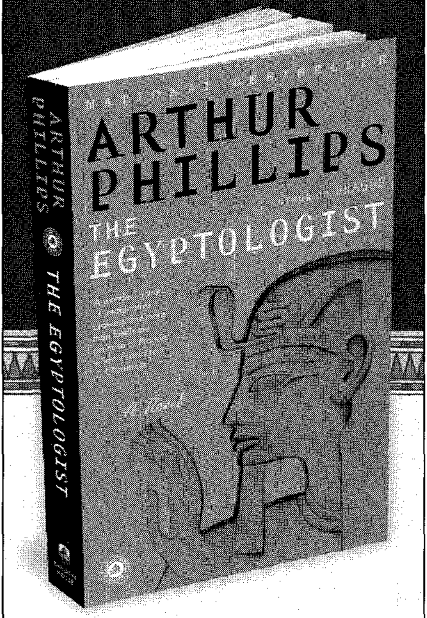

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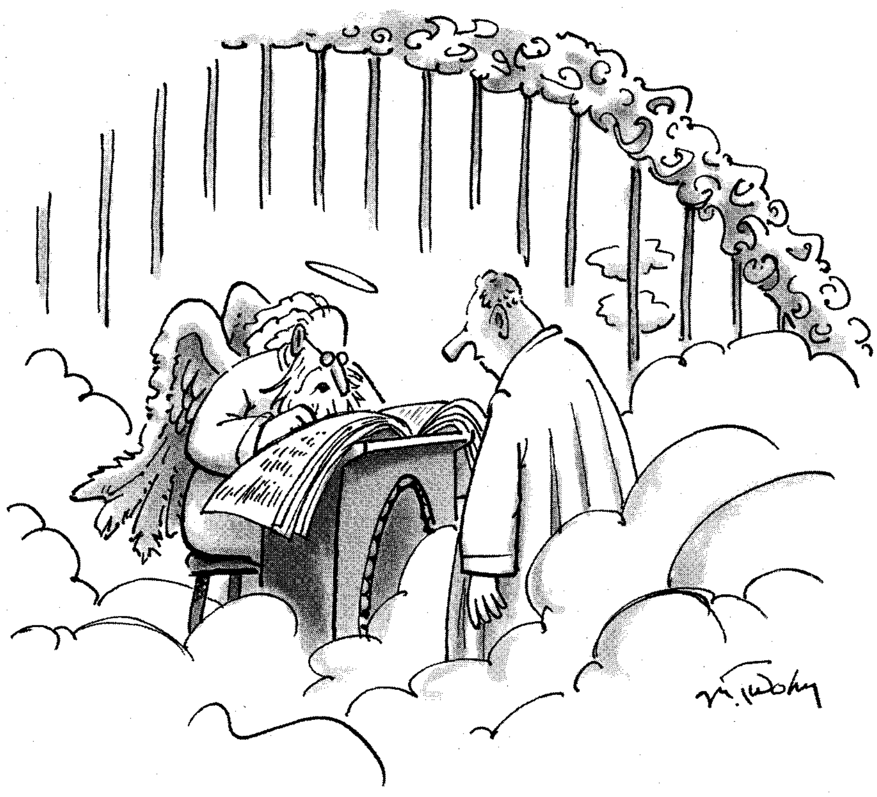

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THIS WEEK'S WEB EXCLUSIVE:

Jon Lee Anderson talks about Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai, with an expanded slide show of photographs by Samantha Appleton.

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THE MAIL

BOOKS VS. VIDEO GAMES

Malcolm Gladwell, in his review of Steven Johnson's "Everything Bad Is Good for You," discusses the relative merits of learning by reading books and learning by playing video games, and floats the possibility that "playing a video game could be as important cognitively as reading a book" (Books, May 16th). Perhaps, but books provide a frame of reference in a way that video games never can. Street fights with Iraqi insurgents, for example, might make for a great video game. But that game wouldn't teach someone about colonialism, energy policy, or C.I.A. history in the Middle East. Our video-game-educated populace is, increasingly, remarkably savvy about what it knows, and perilously oblivious of all that it doesn't.
Raphael Cushnir
Tomales, Calif.

Gladwell is correct that video games teach players how "to explore and sort through hypotheses." However, they can also teach a violent and misogynistic world view. For example, in Grand Theft Auto III, a player can increase his "health" by picking up a prostitute and having (implied) sex with her in his car; he can then recover the money paid to her by following her out of the car and killing her. It is also true that, as Gladwell states, the results of meta-analysis on the value of homework are inconclusive, but this does not mean that schools should switch over to assigning video games. A meta-analysis of dozens of independent studies of the effects of violent video games on behavior has found that playing these games increases aggressive behavior and emotion, and decreases behavior intended to benefit others. Is this the kind of smartening up we want or need?
Steve Frolking
Durham, N.H.

JOHN BROWN'S LEGACY

Assessing the career of John Brown, Adam Gopnik concludes, "In the very long run, even the best moral arguments get their force from the readiness of men to kill and die for them" (Books, April 25th). Feminism is an exception. By asserting the moral claim of women's right to equal standing, it has caused great cultural shifts, integrating women into the public sphere and demolishing traditional conceptions of femininity. Yet little killing and martyrdom have accompanied this historical development. Almost no well-known feminist identifies with a romantic ideology of personal honor through violence. Is it possible that women have developed different mental habits for responding to the shame and humiliation that, in Gopnik's analysis, provoked Brown?
Anne Manuel
Detroit, Mich.

John Brown's manifest eccentricity and his ultimate failure make it easy to underestimate his strategy. Given that, in the nineteen-sixties, the technologically advanced U.S. military could not prevent the Vietnamese from using the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Brown's plan to base a mobile guerrilla force in the Appalachian wilderness, where it could strike at will into Alabama, or Kentucky, or the Carolinas, seems plausible. With time, he would probably have drawn black recruits in large numbers. Harriet Tubman intended to join him, and if she hadn't fallen sick Brown might not have dawdled at Harpers Ferry. Certainly the political prognosis he gave on the day of his execution suggests considerable acumen: "I John Brown am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty, land: will* never be purged *away*; but with Blood. I had *as I now think: vainly* flattered myself that without *very much* bloodshed; it might be done." Written sixteen months before the start of the Civil War, that's pretty good prophesying.
Robert Wells
Oakland, Calif.

•

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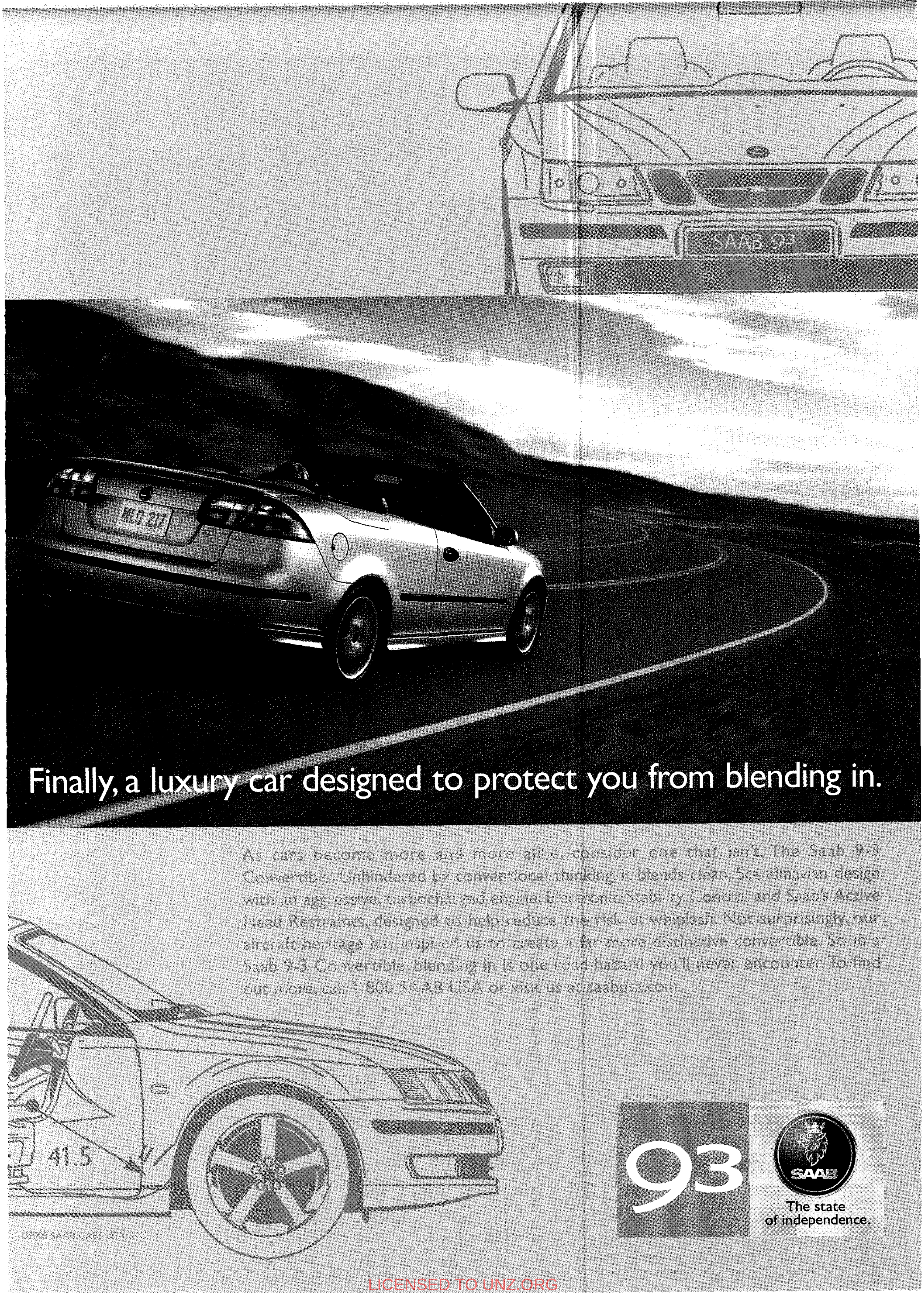
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
MEETING TWAIN

Samuel Langhorne Clemens played Mark Twain for almost fifty years; he débuted the pseudonym in an 1863 travel piece and continued until his death, in 1910. The actor Hal Holbrook has played Twain for even longer; since he first portrayed the author onstage in 1954 he has given more than two thousand performances in character. "Mark Twain Tonight!," the latest version of Holbrook's one-man show, returns to Broadway for three weeks. (See page 14.)

NIGHT LIFE
MARIA MCKEE

In the mid-eighties, McKee fronted the country-rock band Lone Justice. Her solo career has been inconsistent and sometimes frustrating, but her most recent album, "Peddlin' Dreams," goes back to the ground she staked out with her finest work, "You Gotta Sin to Get Saved." She stops by Joe's Pub on June 2. (See page 16.)

DANCE
"RAIN"

The seventeen-member Cirque Éloize, from Quebec, has no animals and no clowns—instead, there are aerial acrobatics and surreal sets. The troupe's latest show, which is set backstage at a small circus and investigates the relationships among the various performers, comes to the New Victory Theatre starting this week. (See page 23.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
TAN DUN

As part of the River to River Festival, Tan Dun—best known for his score to "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"—conducts his "Water Passion After St. Matthew," which combines video, Asian and Western string instruments, a chorus, vocal soloists, and water percussion, at the South Street Seaport on June 1. (See page 23.)

READINGS AND TALKS
FRANÇOIS OZON

Ozon, the young French director responsible for movies such as "8 Women," "Swimming Pool," and the upcoming "5 x 2," will discuss his works with David Schwartz, the chief curator of film at the Museum of the Moving Image, as part of an Ozon retrospective. (June 5; see page 28.)

Zeff, a female Siberian tiger, at home at the Bronx Zoo. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

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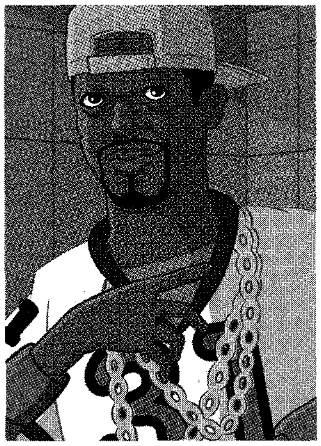
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
DUDE RAUNCH



If there is one m.c. who deserves to benefit from the focus on Houston hip-hop, it is Devin the Dude, who makes a rare New York appearance at Rothko on June 1. Eleven years ago, Devin and his group Odd Squad débuted with an album called "Fadanuf fa Erybody!!," a collection of the sort of laid-back live funk that became popular after Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg's album "The Chronic." But Devin's humor was too blue and weird for radio in 1994, and it continued through several brilliant solo records. Now, though, the market has plenty of room for the wittily vulgar. Like Dave Chappelle, Devin plays the long-suffering hedonist, unsure why the police are so interested in his weed, pleading with women to forgive his faults, and musing about why things don't work out. His drawl is as smoky as Snoop Dogg's, and his comic skills are more expansive than Eminem's, so it would seem that Devin is late to pick up his check. Let's hope this year—he has an album tentatively slated for summer—is the year he does.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AFTER THE NIGHT AND THE MUSIC
A new work by Elaine May, about life in this millennium, stars Jeanne Berlin and J. Smith-Cameron. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. Opens June 1 at 8. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

BIRDIE BLUE
A new play about love, marriage, and time by Cheryl L. West stars S. Epatha Merkerson, Charles Weldon, and Billy Porter. Seret Scott directs. Previews begin June 2. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

BORDER/CLASH: A LITANY OF DESIRES
Def Poetry Jam's Staceyann Chin presents a one-woman autobiographical play about her life as a Jamaican-born New Yorker. Directed by Rob Urbinati. Previews begin June 3. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
Chekhov's classic drama, in a new adaptation by Tom Donaghy, comes to the Atlantic Theatre. Scott Zigler directs. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CONSTANT WIFE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents Somerset Maugham's comedy, set in London in the twenties, about a straying husband, a scheming wife, and their urbane circle of friends. Mark Brokaw directs a sparkling cast, led by Lynn Redgrave, Kate Burton, Kathryn Meisle, and Michael Cumpsty. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

MARK TWAIN TONIGHT!
Hal Holbrook has been channelling the curmudgeonly Missouri writer onstage since 1954; he won a Tony for his performance in 1966, when he brought the show to Broadway. The play (which is continually revised) now comes to the Brooks Atkinson for a three-week run. Previews begin June 6. (256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE PARIS LETTER
A Wall Street macher is dogged by secrets from his past, in the New York première of a play by Jon Robin Baitz, presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company. John Glover, Michele Pawk, and Ron Rifkin lead the cast. Directed by Doug Hughes. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

RICHARD AND ANNE
In a play by Maxwell Anderson, a theatre company staging a production of "Richard III" is haunted by the ghosts of the king and his fool. Presented by the Mirror Repertory Company and directed by Anthony Nelson. One preview on June 1. Opens June 2 at 8. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 212-868-4444.)

TRAILERVILLE
The trials of the denizens of a trailer park are the subject of a new play by the novelist John Dufresne ("Louisiana Power & Light"), presented by the Blue Heron Theatre. Previews begin June 3. Opens June 5 at 3. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-868-4444.)

NOW PLAYING

THE ARGUMENT
The Vineyard Theatre presents the première of a play by Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros about a couple having romantic difficulties. Melissa Leo and Jay O. Sanders star. Directed by Maria Mileaf. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

BFE
Julia Cho's new play, about a dysfunctional Asian-American family, is the season closer for Playwrights Horizons. Directed by Gordon Edelstein. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
Three plays run this week: "The Pull of Negative Gravity," a drama about a Welsh soldier wounded in the Iraq war; "Tabloid Caligula," a comedy by Darren Murphy about an aging criminal; and "Mortal Ladies Possessed," an adaptation by Matthew Hurt of stories by Tennessee Williams, which stars Linda Marlowe (and is reviewed in this issue). (59E59 Theatre, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

FLIGHT
This well-crafted play by Garth Wingfield explores the troubling personal and professional history of the aviator and inventor Charles Lindbergh. Among the many points that Wingfield illuminates in his sparse, cinematic script is the way in which the mythic moments of Lindbergh's life—the transatlantic crossing, the notorious kidnapping of his child—more or less stifled any chance he might have had to become a person, rather than a public figure. Gregg Edelman gives a spookily accurate portrayal of Lindbergh, and Kerry O'Malley plays his wife, the writer Anne Morrow, with sparkling lyricism. Directed by Nick Corley. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/30/05.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS
Joe Mantello directs a pitch-perfect revival of David Mamet's majestic play about a group of Chicago real-estate brokers who fight to get the leads, get ahead of each other, close the sale, and get on the board. It's a sort of three-card monte of verbal manipulation, in which words are decoys of self-interest that connect the speakers to nothing but their own craven desire. From the first beat of this production, the play swings; the virtuoso cast—Alan Alda, Liev Schreiber, Gordon Clapp, Jeffrey Tambor, Frederick Weller, Tom Wopat, Jordan Lage—sends it solid. (5/9/05) (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

IVANOV
The sad-sack hero of this brooding Chekhov play torments himself and nearly everyone in sight, yet women fall naïvely for his ennui. The National Asian-American Theatre Company mines the script for laughs, and the result is a tug-of-war between the abject Ivanov (Joel de la Fuente) and his ship-of-fools entourage. For all their charisma, the actors lack a touch of shading, but a dull pain pulses beneath their banter. True to form, the scene where they all cry is also the funniest. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, Lexington Ave. at 23rd St. 646-312-4085.)

KNOCK ON WOOD
In his one-man show about his time on the front lines of the Yom Kippur War, the Israeli actor Samuel Calderon is unexpectedly warm and jovial—he is not a veteran who is wrestling with his past but one who has got over it completely. As such, the story lacks some dramatic tension; Calderon delivers his soldier's tale as if it were a shaggy-dog story being told by the back-slapping fellow on the next barstool. (13th Street Repertory Company, 50 W. 13th St. 212-675-6677.)

MEMORY HOUSE
Kathleen Tolan's new play, about a confrontation between a mother and her adopted daughter, is a vexing work, both strange and irritating, largely because its protagonist, an eighteen-year-old high-school senior called Katia (Natalia Zvereva), is a tiny soul with a big mouth. What comes out of that mouth—complaint after complaint—sours the air around her to such a degree that viewers find themselves wanting not only to turn away from her halitosis of the soul but to leave the theatre altogether. Which is a pity, given that the play also stars Dianne Wiest, as Maggie, the woman who adopted Katia from a Russian orphanage when she was five or six. Wiest is as natural an actress as they come, with a lovely, trilling voice and a fluttery imagination. But she is not supported by a substantive play, or player, and it's sad to see her wading in such shallow dramaturgical waters. (5/30/05) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MISS JULIE
Set in the kitchen of Miss Julie's father, a landowning count, Strindberg's drama centers on class and sexual differences as they are played out between Miss Julie (Marin Hinkle) and her father's butler and valet, Jean. What draws them to each other is precisely their class difference. Their union is inevitable because it is forbidden. The talented Reg Rogers (who resembles a meatier Adrien Brody) plays Jean; he is a star, and he wants you to know it. There are layers to Hinkle's Miss Julie, but unfortunately too many of them are soft; the director, Anders Cato, has failed to draw from her the complicated sense of evil and ma-

MICHAEL WELDON

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nipulation that is necessary for the part. (5/30/05) (Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

SONGS FROM AN UNMADE BED
The lyricist Mark Campbell ("Volpone") has enlisted a talented batch of composers—including Joseph Thalken, Jeffrey Stock, and Jenny Giering—to score his alternately warm and jaded solo song cycle about middle-aged gay romance. Both Campbell's words and Michael Winther's performance fare best when they are tinged with bitterness, as in one episode that warns wryly against sex with actors; elsewhere, the dating humor sometimes sags. David Schweizer's deft staging and Neil Patel's dreamscape set make the piece a surprising pleasure for the eyes. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through June 26.)

THE TALK OF THE TOWN
The Peccadillo Theatre Company's brisk and clever play about the wits who gathered at the Algonquin Round Table in the twenties, featuring well-crafted period-style songs by Ginny Redington and Tom Dawes, plays every Monday night this summer in the hotel's Oak Room. (59 W. 44th St. 212-840-6800.)

TERRORISM
Elizabeth Marvel stars in a dark comedy by Vladimir and Oleg Presnyakov about the psychic burden imposed by the fear of terrorism. Directed by Will Frears. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THRILL ME: THE LEOPOLD & LOEB STORY
The York Theatre presents a new musical by Stephen Dolginoff, about the erotic friendship between two rich young Chicago men that led to a brutal murder in 1924, prompting the "trial of the century." (Saint Peter's Church at Citigroup, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

Also Playing

ALL SHOOK UP: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAST ON THE MOON:** Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DESSA ROSE:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **THE GLASS MENAGERIE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HURLYBURLY:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **JULIUS CAESAR:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ON GOLDEN POND:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE PASSION OF THE CRAWFORD:** Zipper Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. (Through June 5.) **THE PILLOWMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **SCORE:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. (Through June 9.) **SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER:** Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. (Through June 16.) **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **TWELVE ANGRY MEN:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. (Closes June 11.) **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200. **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **WOMAN BEFORE A GLASS:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes June 12.)

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 1-2 and June 6: **B. B. King** the man comes to B. B. King the club. June 3: The Crescent City legends the **Funky Meters.** June 4: **Dick Dale** hangs ten. June 7: The four m.c.s and two d.j.s who go by the name **Jurassic 5** came out of the early-nineties Los Angeles underground hip-hop scene. The group has the get-loose sound of a jamming block party, but with the legendary Cut Chemist and Nu-Mark on the turntables, it maintains a deep respect for the d.j.s.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 5: The Philadelphia roots-rock band **Marah** shares the stage with **Nick Hornby,** one of its staunchest supporters. Hornby, who sang the band's praises in a lengthy *Times* Op-Ed piece a year ago, will open the show by reading a series of unpublished essays about particular bands, and then Marah will cover songs by those artists. The final essay, about Marah, precipitates the band's full set.

CASTLE CLINTON
Battery Park—In the fall of 1850, thousands of New Yorkers flocked to the theatre here to catch their first glimpse of the European singing sensation Jenny Lind, known as the Swedish Nightingale. Thanks in part to the efforts of P. T. Barnum, Lind became one of America's biggest stars. On June 3 at 7, the vocalist **Audra McDonald,** joined by **Iva Bittova** and **Rachelle Garniez,** pays tribute to her. (For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-835-2789, ext. 4.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 4: The **Killers,** a Las Vegas foursome with an eighties aesthetic, profit from the sounds of an era that neither they nor the majority of their audience are old enough to have experienced for themselves. A benefit concert.

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM
Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—June 1: **Kraftwerk,** the Rolling Stones of electronic music (they've been around nearly as long), imbue an otherwise cold, robotic realm with a pop sensibility and a human, albeit stiffly Teutonic voice.

THE HOOK
18 Commerce St., Red Hook, Brooklyn (718-797-3007)—June 3: A night of lumbering guitars and dyspeptic invective courtesy of **Eyehategod, Byzantine, Buried Inside,** and other metal combos. June 5: Reggae with the Jamaican vocalist **Half Pint** and friends.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—June 1: The glistening global electro-pop of New York's own **Brazilian Girls.** June 3: The soulful bluesman **Robert Cray** stops by with songs from his new album, "Twenty." With the leggy, piano-pounding swamp rocker **Marcia Ball.** June 7: The oblique, former Pavement front man **Stephen Malkmus.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—June 2, early: **Dayna Kurtz,** who sounds like the love child of Billie Holiday and Tom Waits, covers an expansive range of tunes by the likes of Duke Ellington, Sam Cooke, and Prince on her new album, "Beautiful Yesterday." She's joined here by **Tarantula,** a New York-based string-heavy trio that constructs anguished soundscapes. June 2, late: **Maria McKee.** As the voice of the gritty eighties roots-rockers Lone Justice, the singer-songwriter was alternative country before the genre had a name. Since splitting from the band, in 1988, McKee has experimented with different styles, but her new album, "Peddlin' Dreams," is a return to rootsy form. June 4: The young Mexican composer and violinist Ernesto Villa-Lobos leads his fearless band **Bamba NY** through classical string pieces laced with the *jarana* and *guitarrón* grooves of his native Veracruz. The **Mingus Orchestra** is here Thursdays, with sets at 11:30 and 1:30 A.M.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—The **Loser's Lounge,** a loose collection of downtown musicians led by the cultural archeologist and keyboard player Joe McGinty, usually covers one artist at a time, but on June 3-4 it skewers and pays tribute to the jangle-heavy melancholia of the Smiths and the lovelorn dystopia of the Cure in its first-ever battle of the bands. June 5: The singer-songwriter **Peter Himmelman.**

TABLES FOR TWO

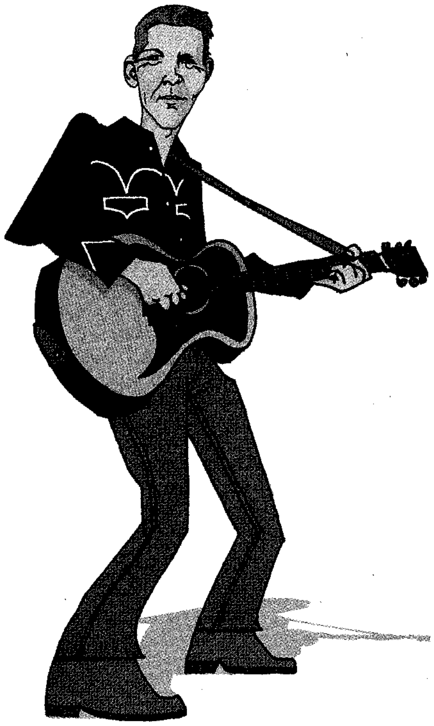
CLINTON ST. BAKING COMPANY & RESTAURANT

4 Clinton St. (646-602-6263)—At this busy Lower East Side spot, the brunch crowd begins to form early. One drizzly spring Sunday, well before noon, the wait time was forty-five minutes, and clusters of would-be diners huddled outside under their umbrellas. A woman watching as plates of food arrived at the tables inside seemed to have the menu memorized: "There are the onion rings—those are so good! And the French toast with bananas and pecans! Oh, I love the country breakfast—eggs, biscuit, ham, so yummy." Later, a young girl clutched the wrought-iron fence that stood between her and the window and stared in hungrily at the blueberry-stuffed pancakes and waffles smothered with fresh strawberries.

The scene isn't quite as frenzied at dinnertime, when the menu is a hit-or-miss mix of the gourmet and the comforting: recently there were spicy shrimp with unremarkable fried green tomatoes, tequila-marinated chicken wings, a tender fillet of Cajun-spiced salmon. A truffle-and-goat-cheese pizza, for all its ambition, felt contrived next to the simple pleasures of the sweet-potato fries. The onion rings make an encore appearance at dinner—airy and crisp, with tart tomato jam and a smooth lemon aioli—as do the pancakes, accompanied by addictively frothy, toffee-flavored maple butter. The homespun atmosphere is reaffirmed by a barrage of classic desserts, including rich chocolate icebox cake and strawberry-rhubarb pie, a preview of summer under a golden lattice crust. An immensely appealing sundae, ice cream melting around a warm brownie, is topped off with hot fudge and whipped cream.

Clinton Street's culinary renaissance is old news by now; hip little restaurants are beginning to outnumber the bodegas and laundromats. Still, the neighborhood's past—with its lines of washing hung out in tenement blocks—is sentimentally memorialized by black-and-white photographs that hang on the restaurant's walls. Meanwhile, most of the tables are filled with self-consciously scruffy twentysomethings who seem to be showing their sleek Connecticut mothers how civilized their new home can be. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; Sundays for breakfast and lunch. Entrées $11-$21.)

—*Andrea Thompson*



Robbie Fulks, at the Mercury Lounge.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—June 6: The guitarist and gravelly vocalist **Howard Fishman** returns to the days earlier this decade when his band consisted of the trumpeter Erik Jekabson, the bassist Jon Flaugher, and the violinist Russell Farhang (all of whom will be joining him here) for a one-off rendition of his second album "I Like You a Lot."

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—June 1: **Robbie Fulks.** Of the artists who have come to prominence during the recent alternative-country movement, Fulks is perhaps the one who flirts most with the traditional Nashville structure. Until recently he regularly travelled to Tennessee from his home in Chicago to pitch songs on Music Row. After surviving an almost predictable major-label disaster, 1998's pop-influenced "Let's Kill Saturday Night," Fulks has returned with a series of albums that showcase his mordant lyrics. His new release, "Georgia Hard," includes a hilarious track, "I'm Gonna Take You Home (and Make You Like Me)," about a drunken exchange between a horny businessman and a woman whom he fails to recognize as his wife. Fittingly enough, it's a duet with his spouse, Donna Fulks.

ROTHKO
116 Suffolk St., at Rivington St. (212-475-7088)—June 1: The Houston m.c. **Devin the Dude.** June 2-3: The stellar U.K. electronic duo **Plaid** (a.k.a. Andy Turner and Ed Handley) helps this Lower East Side club celebrate its first anniversary.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—June 1: **Mark Geary,** an Irish singer-songwriter who used to open for Jeff Buckley at the old Sin-é, back when it was in the East Village. June 4, early: The guitarist **Duke Robillard,** one of the founders of Roomful of Blues and a former member of the Fabulous Thunderbirds. June 4, late: The veteran multi-instrumentalist and singer **Jean-Paul Samputu** lost his parents and four siblings in the Rwandan genocide. His latest album, "Testimony from Rwanda," touches on rumba, reggae, gospel, and Afro-beat styles as it simultaneously evokes that tragedy and offers hope for the future. June 5: The local pan-Balkan brass band **Zlatne Uste.**

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—The twenty-eight-year-old London-based performer **M.I.A.** exploded onto the scene earlier this year with her début album, "Arular." She was born Maya Arulpragasam, and the politics of her Sri Lankan heritage (her father is a Tamil separatist) and her U.K. musical roots (hip-hop, dancehall, grime) give her a wild sound quite unlike anyone else's. Demand for the record was stoked by "Piracy Funds Terrorism," a mix tape she created last year with the Philadelphia-based d.j. **Diplo** (of Hollertronix). Diplo spins mostly Miami bass and break beat, adding another layer of rhythm and a sharp edge to M.I.A.'s music. They perform in tandem June 7-8.

JASHAR AWAN

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—June 6: In the tradition of vintage post-punk outfits like Gang of Four and XTC, the **Futureheads** trade in jerky rock that's rife with jittery time signatures and shards of staccato guitar.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—June 1-12: **Freddy Cole's** new album, "This Love of Mine," finds the vocalist luxuriating in ballads and lightly swinging songs that feel like they were written exclusively for his ripe tenor.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 1-4: The **Pat Martino** quartet. The guitarist Martino has won the admiration of three generations of jazz fretmen. He knows how to transform knowledge, technique, and ideas into genuine music—a notion lost on most guitar manglers.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—May 31-June 5: The remarkably versatile singer-pianist **Diane Schuur,** who is equally at home with forties standards, R. & B. numbers, and sultry torch songs.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through July 2, **Eartha Kitt.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 31-June 5: The recent death of the bassist Percy Heath hasn't stopped the saxophonist Jimmy and the drummer Albert (Tootie) from continuing with the **Heath Brothers** band. **Paul West** steps in for Percy, and the band is rounded out by the pianist **Jeb Patton** and the guitarist **Russell Malone.**

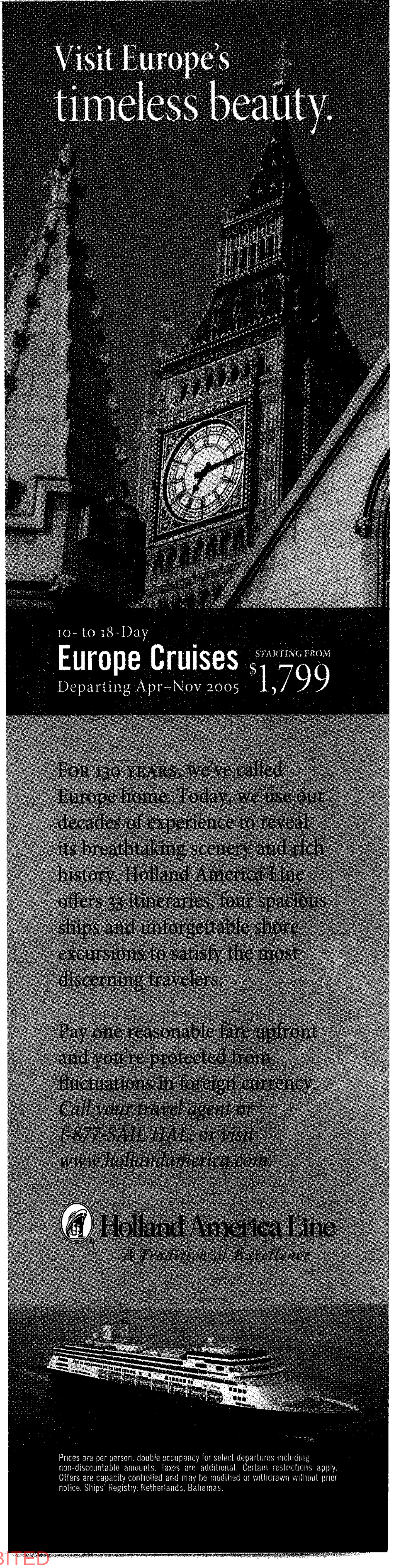
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 31-June 5: The vocalist **Luciana Souza** embraces the work of Paulinho da Viola, Chico Buarque, Ivan Lins, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Caetano Veloso, and other composers on her latest recording, "Duos II." She's assisted by a number of sympathetic guitarists, including **Romero Lubambo,** who joins her here.

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—June 3: The cabaret mainstays **KT Sullivan, Mark Nadler, Heather MacRae,** and **Craig Rubano** present their Richard Rodgers tribute, "Something Wonderful."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 31-June 5: The drummer **Paul Motian** mixes and matches players from his various musical projects in his new Trio 2000 + One, which features the saxophonist **Chris Potter,** the bassist **Larry Grenadier,** and the pianist **Masabumi Kikuchi.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—Two recent installations are on view in **"Tony Oursler at the Met: 'Studio' and 'Climaxed.'"** The first contemplates the influences at work on the artist through an assemblage of pieces by the likes of Jacqueline Humphries, Rem Koolhaas, and Kaare Rafoss. The second, more traditional Oursler work is a giant, lumpy potato head with flames and a blinky face



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BIG PICTURES

TOMER HANUKA

There's something dismayingly old-fashioned about the enormous new Gregory Crewdson photographs at Luhring Augustine, no matter how up-to-the-minute their digital post-production processing. It's not just the settings—deserted small-town streets and drab middle-class interiors—but also the hackneyed, dead-end themes of alienation, isolation, existential despair. As Crewdson has shifted his focus from the paranormal to the (all too) human, he's got himself into a big-budget rut that's beginning to look like self-parody. No question, his work is brilliantly staged, but the cinematic artifice can be stifling, especially when it seems an end in itself. Even the best photos in the show (one of a woman who has dragged a tattered rosebush into her bed, another of a naked couple lying awake on a back-yard mattress, and every one of those weirdly fraught street scenes) collapse under the weight of obvious effort. Crewdson doesn't need a huge supporting staff—the catalogue lists nearly three hundred people—to make inventive and unforgettable pictures. At this point, they're only getting in his way.

—*Vince Aletti*

projected on it, its mouth voicing demented and hilarious threats, boasts, and sorrows. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"The Kano School: Orthodoxy and Iconoclasm"** centers on a pair of exquisite four-panel screens depicting the eight Taoist Immortals, made for the Tensho-in temple in Kyoto by the master Sansetsu circa 1647. Split apart some forty years ago and sold to the Met and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the pair are reunited here and shown with related works from the Met's collection. Through June 5. ♦ **"All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860."** Through Aug. 21. ♦ **"Chanel,"** a retrospective of designs from the couture house. Through Aug. 7. ♦ **"John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker"** presents a few dozen pieces by a prominent Colonial American furniture-maker alongside additional work by his contemporaries. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A summer installation in the roof garden of five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ **"Max Ernst: A Retrospective."** Some hundred and eighty paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and illustrated books by the restlessly creative artist (1891-1976). Through July 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—A major retrospective of work by the photographer Lee Friedlander, who was born in 1934, opens June 5. ♦ **"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort to Thirty-fourth Street. The plan includes a butterfly garden, a lily pond, meadows, paths, and decks for sunbathing. One of the more ingenious ideas is "peel-up seating," in which floor planks cantilever up to make benches. Also on view are other experiments in elevated architecture from around the world, and even from out of it; the show closes with Michael Kalil's gorgeous diagrams for a spherical space-station module. Through Oct. 31. ♦ Chris Marker, the esoteric French filmmaker, goes artified Ken Burns with **"Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men,"** a nineteen-minute, two-track, eight-screen, black-and-white digital montage of words and pictures from and about the First World War. Through June 13. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Art of Tomorrow: Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim"** is an exhibition devoted to the museum's first curator and director, who was also an artist herself. Through Aug. 10. ♦ **"The Eye of the Storm: Works in Situ by Daniel Buren."** Through June 8. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing"** examines eight artists whose work straddles the divide between the abstract and the representational, including Terry Winters, Julie Mehretu, and Carroll Dunham. Opens June 2. ♦ **"Banks Violette: Untitled."** Through Oct. 2. ♦ **"Prints Into Drawings,"** a roomful of prints that were made in the last fifty years, illustrates the shared techniques of drawing and printmaking. Through Aug. 28. ♦ **"Landscape,"** an idiosyncratic group of pieces from the permanent collection. Through Sept. 18. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA

120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—Sue de Beer goes back to adolescence with **"Black Sun,"** an installation of cutout wooden trees, pony busts, and a giant pink castle-cum-doll house carpeted wall to wall in black. Inside, gothic videos of girls stripping off Sonic Youth T-shirts and murmuring poetic nothings embody teen-aged Sturm und Drang. It's the girl version of comic-and-action-figure nostalgia, but what's missing is compelling evidence that this trip down memory lane is anything more than just additional fodder for a culture already obsessed with youth. Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 11 to 6, and Fridays 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Basquiat"** is an important, intensely enjoyable retrospective of the neo-expressionist, who died in 1988, at the age of twenty-seven. Jean-Michel Basquiat turns out to be the essential American painter of the early eighties, who brought lyrical truth to a largely facetious revival of showily subjective modern styles. He did his best work in an early rush, in 1982: paintings of furious and hilarious masked heads, strewn with verbal and visual quotations from many sources. Room after room, the viewer rafts a stream of consciousness so acute as to suggest Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway," jazzified. Through June 5. ♦ **"Michelangelo of the Menagerie: Bronze Works by Antoine-Louis Barye."** The savvy artist-entrepreneur Barye (1795-1875), a Delacroix contemporary who built his own foundry and churned out small bronzes for the commercial trade, knew his market. His subjects—lions, bears, stags, and other fauna—re-create in manageable miniature the conflicts his clients played out in human spheres, in turbulent nineteenth-century French politics and ruthless business dealings. Barye was no commercial hack, though. He balanced chic Romantic ideas about exoticism and the sublimeness of nature with a commitment to physical accuracy—fitting, since he served as the master of zoological drawing at the Museum of Natural History in Paris for two decades. Through July 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance"** is a thrilling show, quick to stoke imagination and amazement. Items on view include wing suits for skydivers, fast-deploying webs for riot control, and the Tumbleweed, a giant computerized beach ball that follows the wind on Mars, periodically deflating to collect data. Through Oct. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 9; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Bill Traylor, William Edmondson, and the Modernist Impulse."** The current emphasis on naïveté and sincerity makes this the perfect moment for the outsider artists Traylor (1854-1949) and Edmondson (1874-1951). Their lack of concern for Western traditions like illusionistic space and sculptural proportions also makes them modern, in a sense. Edmondson, a sculptor of stocky limestone marbles, was the first African-American artist to have a show at MOMA, in 1937. Traylor's drawings on cardboard—svelte silhouettes prefiguring Kara Walker's—carry wild titles like "Construction with Exciting Event" or "Chicken Toter Being Chased." Interspersed among the works are photographs by Louise Dahl-Wolfe and Charles Shannon of the artists in their work spaces: Traylor on the sidewalk in Montgomery and Edmondson in the Nashville yard where he sold his sculptures as grave markers. Through June 26. ♦ Chris Ofili's watercolor **"Afro Muses"** are "imaginary portraits" drawn from history, memory, and everyday life. Through July 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

UKRAINIAN MUSEUM

222 E. 6th St. (212-228-0110)—A supporting player in twentieth-century sculpture is shown to advantage in **"Alexander Archipenko: Vision and Continuity."** The exhibition highlights innovative work by the artist (1887-1964), from the painting-display machine he patented in 1927 (and dedicated to Einstein and Edison) to explorations of newly invented materials like Plexiglas and Formica. The show also includes plenty of the Ukrainian-born artist's better-known bronze nudes and torsos. It's exciting to see a modernist master forge bravely past mid-century and adopt the American fondness for plastics (particularly after he emigrated to the U.S. in 1923), in works like "Cleopatra" (1957), an abstract relief crafted from wood, found objects, and Bakelite. Through Sept. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11:30 to 5.)

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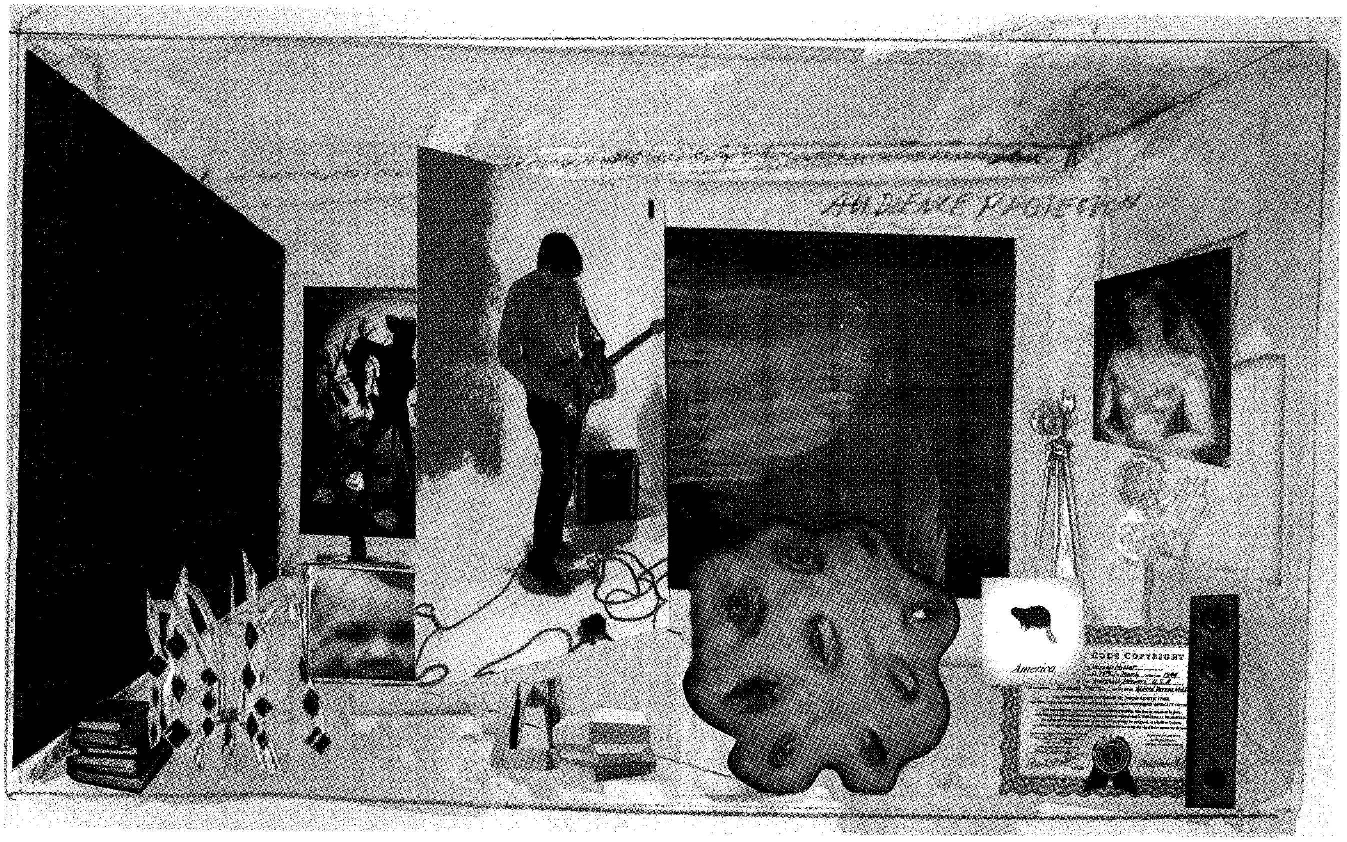


A working sketch for Tony Oursler's "Studio," an installation at the Met inspired by Gustave Courbet's allegorical "Artist's Studio."

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

DIANA MICHENER
The book that accompanies Michener's latest show of photographs, titled "Dogs, Fires, Me," presents the artist at her most unrestrained and overwrought. Although there are other naked bodies on display, her own remains central, and close-ups of her implacable face serve as the prime witness. Only a little of the book's dreamlike blur of chaos, conflagration, ecstasy, anguish, and sex that edges into violence has made it into the exhibition, which looks rather flimsy as a result. Michener, who imagines herself a fierce madwoman, is reduced to fits of girlish petulance. Through June 22. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

"POP"
An object lesson in relations between American and German Pop art, this mini museum show pits "Brillo Box" (1964) and "Twelve Jackies" (1964) against "Toilet Paper" (1965) and "Girl on a Donkey" (1966)—that is, Warhol's serialized but luscious commodities versus Richter's bleak ciphers of the lone commodity. Or look at Polke's untitled double portrait of a doll-like woman with some of her features stripped out (1963-64) next to Oldenburg's segmented, same-but-different construction "Plate of Meat" (1961). It's also nice to catch sight of Konrad Lueg, who is rarely shown here. Through July 1. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

Short List

BILL BURKE: Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through June 18. **JACK GOLDSTEIN:** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400. Through June 11. **JULIE MEHRETU:** Projectile, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-1585. Through June 18. **JULIAN SCHNABEL:** C&M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0200. Through June 4. **JAVIER SILVA-MEINEL:** Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059. Through June 4.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

RINKO KAWAUCHI
Already an international star, this young Japanese photographer makes a characteristically modest splash with her first New York solo show. Her color prints—shown in both large and small sizes—seem to be excerpted from a poetic, encyclopedic inventory of the natural and material world. A breaking wave, a pair of butterflies, a fluttering moth, water boiling on a stove, the dangling necks of three dead chickens, an egg cracked just enough to reveal the wet feathers inside: these are not momentous images, but, like those of Wolfgang Tillmans, they add up to a persuasive, engaging vision. Through June 18. (Cohan and Leslie, 138 Tenth Ave. 212-206-8710.)

JOAN MITCHELL
From 1960 to 1962, Mitchell had a studio on the Rue Frémicourt in Paris, and the paintings she did there are redolent with the angst and joie de vivre of a young woman emancipated from the pressures of the New York art world—where Ab Ex was giving way to minimalism—and plunged into proximity with the colors of Matisse and the moods of van Gogh. Her flurries of impasto, passages of raw canvas, drips, and smears are both scatological and optimistic. The palette mixes exuberance and anxiety: brown and viridian, gun-metal gray and moss, splashed with bright, hot lavender and coral. Through June 25. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

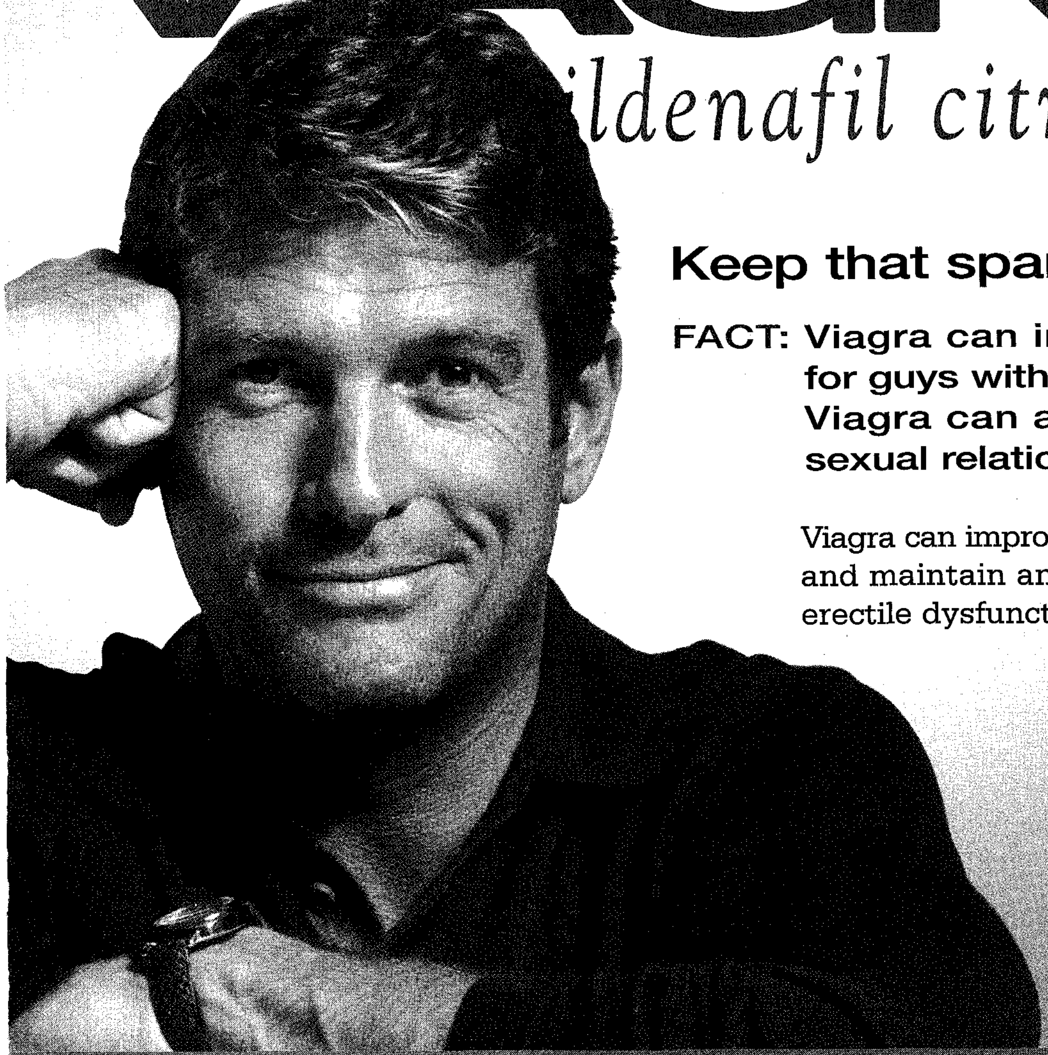
PIERRE SOULAGES
Soulages is France's answer to Lucian Freud, an octogenarian elder statesman of painting whose work distills a nation's self-image. His early career coincided with the zenith of existentialism, and these recent canvases—thick and opaque like rubber or roofing tar with horizontal drag marks through the heavy black paint—conjure Sartre and black wool turtlenecks. It's an association that probably wouldn't fly with Soulages, who's perennially ducked labels like *tachisme,* Art Informel, or Abstract Expressionism. His work bears a fleeting resemblance to all of these, however, which makes this feel like both a contemporary exhibition and a refresher course in postwar painting. A companion show at Chanin presents walnut-stained works on paper. Through June 11. (Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

SOPHIE VON HELLERMANN
Von Hellermann's approach to painting can be glimpsed at Deitch in SoHo, where her collective, Hobbypop, is currently showing. Her New York solo début, at Greene Naftali, is less whimsically structured (no canvases arranged like bunk beds or folding fans) but more manic. Acrylic paint is diluted and used like watercolor in big, washy canvases depicting Albert Einstein sailing or playing the violin (an homage on the hundredth anniversary of $E=mc^2$). Von Hellermann's references are mostly contemporary to Einstein—she evokes Redon and the Futurists—but the greatest surprise is seeing Chagall resurrected in swooping bursts of color and flying figures of billiard players. Through June 18. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

ANDREA ZITTEL
The modern utopian impulse to merge art, design, and craft has been turned into a one-woman cottage industry by Zittel, whose A-Z West workshop in Joshua Tree, California, both mimics and critiques grand social-aesthetic experiments from Bauhaus to Frank Lloyd Wright. Rough but beautiful fibre uniforms stand on dress forms alongside design displays: a plywood desk, oddly shaped fibre office supplies, a stool carved from gray foam. A wall hanging crocheted from sheep and llama wool borrows heavily from seventies hippie-craft aesthetics, but where other artists approach that tradition with smirking irony, Zittel embraces it lovingly and in the process offers a rare and compelling erasure of the divide between art and craft. Through June 18. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-5450.)

Short List

DEAN BYINGTON: Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450. Through June 18. **SOPHIE CALLE:**



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The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, facial flushing, and upset stomach. Less common are bluish or blurred vision, or being sensitive to light. These may occur for a brief time. Remember to protect yourself and your partner from sexually transmitted diseases.

Talk with your doctor first. Make sure you are healthy enough to have sex. If you have chest pain, nausea, or other discomforts during sex, seek medical help right away. Although erections lasting for more than four hours may occur rarely with all ED treatments in this drug class, it is important to seek immediate medical attention. Erections lasting longer than six hours can result in long-term loss of potency.

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Please see our patient summary of information for VIAGRA (25 mg, 50 mg, 100 mg) tablets on the following page.

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PATIENT SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ABOUT

VIAGRA®

(sildenafil citrate) tablets

This summary contains important information about VIAGRA®. It is not meant to take the place of your doctor's instructions. Read this information carefully before you start taking VIAGRA. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you do not understand any of this information or if you want to know more about VIAGRA.

This medicine can help many men when it is used as prescribed by their doctors. However, VIAGRA is not for everyone. It is intended for use only by men who have a condition called erectile dysfunction. **VIAGRA must never be used by men who are taking medicines that contain nitrates of any kind, at any time. This includes nitroglycerin. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe or life threatening level.**

• What Is VIAGRA?
VIAGRA is a pill used to treat erectile dysfunction (impotence) in men. It can help many men who have erectile dysfunction get and keep an erection when they become sexually excited (stimulated).

You will not get an erection just by taking this medicine. VIAGRA helps a man with erectile dysfunction get an erection only when he is sexually excited.

• How Sex Affects the Body
When a man is sexually excited, the penis rapidly fills with more blood than usual. The penis then expands and hardens. This is called an erection. After the man is done having sex, this extra blood flows out of the penis back into the body. The erection goes away. If an erection lasts for a long time (more than 6 hours), it can permanently damage your penis. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have a prolonged erection that lasts more than 4 hours.

Some conditions and medicines interfere with this natural erection process. The penis cannot fill with enough blood. The man cannot have an erection. This is called erectile dysfunction if it becomes a frequent problem.

During sex, your heart works harder. Therefore sexual activity may not be advisable for people who have heart problems. Before you start any treatment for erectile dysfunction, ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex. If you have chest pains, dizziness or nausea during sex, stop having sex and immediately tell your doctor you have had this problem.

• How VIAGRA Works
VIAGRA enables many men with erectile dysfunction to respond to sexual stimulation. When a man is sexually excited, VIAGRA helps the penis fill with enough blood to cause an erection. After sex is over, the erection goes away.

• VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone
As noted above (*How Sex Affects the Body*), ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough for sexual activity.

If you take any medicines that contain nitrates – either regularly or as needed – you should never take VIAGRA. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine or recreational drug containing nitrates, your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe level. You could get dizzy, faint, or even have a heart attack or stroke. Nitrates are found in many prescription medicines that are used to treat angina (chest pain due to heart disease) such as:

- nitroglycerin (sprays, ointments, skin patches or pastes, and tablets that are swallowed or dissolved in the mouth)
- isosorbide mononitrate and isosorbide dinitrate (tablets that are swallowed, chewed, or dissolved in the mouth)

Nitrates are also found in recreational drugs such as amyl nitrate or nitrite ("poppers"). If you are not sure if any of your medicines contain nitrates, or if you do not understand what nitrates are, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

VIAGRA is only for patients with erectile dysfunction. VIAGRA is not for newborns, children, or women. Do not let anyone else take your VIAGRA. VIAGRA must be used only under a doctor's supervision.

• What VIAGRA Does Not Do

- VIAGRA does not cure erectile dysfunction. It is a treatment for erectile dysfunction.
- VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from getting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV — the virus that causes AIDS.
- VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

• What To Tell Your Doctor Before You Begin VIAGRA
Only your doctor can decide if VIAGRA is right for you. VIAGRA can cause mild, temporary lowering of your blood pressure. You will need to have a thorough medical exam to diagnose your erectile dysfunction and to find out if you can safely take VIAGRA alone or with your other medicines. Your doctor should determine if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you:

- have ever had any heart problems (e.g., angina, chest pain, heart failure, irregular heart beats, heart attack or narrowing of the aortic valve)
- have ever had a stroke
- have low or high blood pressure
- have a rare inherited eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa
- have ever had any kidney problems
- have ever had any liver problems
- have ever had any blood problems, including sickle cell anemia or leukemia
- are allergic to sildenafil or any of the other ingredients of VIAGRA tablets
- have a deformed penis, Peyronie's disease, or ever had an erection that lasted more than 4 hours
- have stomach ulcers or any types of bleeding problems
- are taking any other medicines

• VIAGRA and Other Medicines
Some medicines can change the way VIAGRA works. Tell your doctor about **any medicines** you are taking. Do not start or stop taking any medicines before checking with your doctor or pharmacist. This includes prescription and nonprescription medicines or remedies:

- Remember, VIAGRA should never be used with medicines that contain nitrates (see *VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone*).
- If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy for the treatment of high blood pressure or prostate problems, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as you take your dose of alpha-blocker.
- If you are taking a protease inhibitor, your dose may be adjusted (please see *Finding the Right Dose for You*).
- VIAGRA should not be used with any other medical treatments that cause erections. These treatments include pills, medicines that are injected or inserted into the penis, implants or vacuum pumps.

• Finding the Right Dose for You
VIAGRA comes in different doses (25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg). If you do not get the results you expect, talk with your doctor. You and your doctor can determine the dose that works best for you.

- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor prescribes.
- If you think you need a larger dose of VIAGRA, check with your doctor.
- VIAGRA should not be taken more than once a day.

If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of VIAGRA. If you are taking protease inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25 mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of VIAGRA in a 48 hour period. If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as your dose of alpha-blocker.

• How To Take VIAGRA
Take VIAGRA about one hour before you plan to have sex. Beginning in about 30 minutes and for up to 4 hours, VIAGRA can help you get an erection if you are sexually excited. If you take VIAGRA after a high-fat meal (such as a cheeseburger and french fries), the medicine may take a little longer to start working. VIAGRA can help you get an erection when you are sexually excited. You will not get an erection just by taking the pill.

• Possible Side Effects
Like all medicines, VIAGRA can cause some side effects. These effects are usually mild to moderate and usually don't last longer than a few hours. Some of these side effects are more likely to occur with higher doses. The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, flushing of the face, and upset stomach. Less common side effects that may occur are temporary changes in color vision (such as trouble telling the difference between blue and green objects or having a blue color tinge to them), eyes being more sensitive to light, or blurred vision.

In rare instances, men have reported an erection that lasts many hours. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If not treated right away, permanent damage to your penis could occur (see *How Sex Affects the Body*).

Heart attack, stroke, irregular heart beats, and death have been reported rarely in men taking VIAGRA. Most, but not all, of these men had heart problems before taking this medicine. It is not possible to determine whether these events were directly related to VIAGRA.

VIAGRA may cause other side effects besides those listed on this sheet. If you want more information or develop any side effects or symptoms you are concerned about, call your doctor.

• Accidental Overdose
In case of accidental overdose, call your doctor right away.

• Storing VIAGRA
Keep VIAGRA out of the reach of children. Keep VIAGRA in its original container. Store at 25°C (77°F); excursions permitted to 15-30°C (59-86°F) [see USP Controlled Room Temperature].

• For More Information on VIAGRA
VIAGRA is a prescription medicine used to treat erectile dysfunction. Only your doctor can decide if it is right for you. This sheet is only a summary. If you have any questions or want more information about VIAGRA, talk with your doctor or pharmacist, visit www.viagra.com, or call 1-888-4VIAGRA.

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September 2002

Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through June 30. **GREGORY CREWDSON:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through June 18. **NANCY DROSD:** Tatistcheff, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4547. Through June 11. **JASPER JOHNS:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through June 25. **MALCOLM MORLEY:** Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through June 25. **RICHARD PRINCE:** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through June 18. **NEO RAUCH:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through June 18. **PIERRE SOULAGES:** Chanin, 210 Tenth Ave. 646-230-7200. Through June 25.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The highlight of the week—which begins with several programs set to music by Tchaikovsky and concludes with last season's "Raymonda," by Anna-Marie Holmes—is the U.S. première of Christopher Newton's staging of Frederick Ashton's "Sylvia," which he created for the Royal Ballet. To see the cast lists, visit www.abt.org. ♦ May 31 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Nutcracker Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." ♦ June 1 at 2: "Ballet Imperial," "Swan Lake Act II Pas de Deux," "Swan Lake Act III Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." ♦ June 1 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Swan Lake Act II Pas de Deux," "Onegin Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." ♦ June 2 at 8: "Ballet Imperial," "Swan Lake Act II Pas de Deux," "Nutcracker Pas de Deux," and "Theme and Variations." ♦ June 3 at 8, June 4 at 2 and 8, and June 6 at 8: "Sylvia." ♦ June 7 at 8: "Raymonda." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Peter Boal, who joined the company in 1983 and was made a principal in 1989, dances for the last time with City Ballet on June 5, performing "Opus 19/The Dreamer" and an excerpt from "Apollo." The week also includes two performances of Robbins's "Concertino," set to Stravinsky, last seen in 1996. To see the cast lists, visit www.nycballet.com. ♦ June 1 at 8 (an all-Stravinsky program): "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,'" "The Cage," "Concertino," and "Agon." ♦ June 2 at 8: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,'" "Concertino," "After the Rain," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ June 3 at 8: "Octet," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet." ♦ June 4 at 2 (an all-Robbins program): "The Goldberg Variations" and "West Side Story Suite." ♦ June 4 at 8: "Tālā Gaisma," "The Cage," "Concertino," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ June 5 at 3 (a farewell to Peter Boal): "Excerpt from Apollo," "Agon," "West Side Story Suite," and "Opus 19/The Dreamer." ♦ June 7 at 7:30: "Brahms-Schoenberg Quartet," "The Cage," "Concertino," and "West Side Story Suite." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 26.)

DAVID DORFMAN DANCE
In the touching new duet "Approaching Some Calm," part of his twentieth-anniversary season at the Joyce, Dorfman dances with his wife, Lisa Race. They climb on each other, collapse, hold hands, breathe hard; he's distracted, she tries to bring him back. Paunchy and pushing fifty, Dorfman fits the dancer stereotype even less now than he did in 1985, when he started his company. His continuing agility is a kind of surprise that makes his high-concept, big-hearted choreography especially affecting. This program includes an improved, trimmed version of last year's excellent "Lightbulb Theory" and the new work "Older Testaments," which takes on the history of Arab-Jewish relations. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 31-June 3 at 8, June 4 at 2 and 8, and June 5 at 2 and 7:30.)

"TENSE DAVE"
In a new piece by the Australian collaborative Chunky Move, four psychodramas unfold on a revolving stage that holds multiple adjoining rooms, like a doll house. Jodie Fried's ingenious set steals some thunder from the troubled characters—a foot fetishist, a suicidal girl in a white nightgown, a man bewildered by

an Ikea instruction leaflet, and Dave, who stumbles from room to room. The characters' isolated lives intersect, sometimes humorously, sometimes with grisly consequences. Their constrained movement reflects the tension of the characters' inner worlds. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 1-4 at 7:30. Through June 11.)

REBUDAL DANCE
The Filipino-American choreographer Jeff Michael Rebudal, a lithe former member of Seán Curran's company, brings his fruitful meld of contemporary dance with Filipino folk forms to Danspace Project. In "Filipinese," dancers cross the stage in slow spins, their hands posed expressively, bending at the wrists, while in "Mercurial Relapse," set to music by Marty Beller, bursts of action alternate with patches of mysterious calm. Rebudal is joined by his fellow Filipino-American choreographer E. E. Balcos for the duet "React," in which the two explore their shared heritage and sexual identity. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. June 2-4 at 8:30.)

"RAIN"
Quebec's Cirque Éloize eschews animals and greasepaint in favor of high-flying stunts and surreally beautiful images. Its latest spectacle, set on a vaudeville-era stage, offers plenty of both. The gymnastic daring is impressive, but the show's real strength is the director Daniele Finzi Pasca's eye for composition. His best scenes, like the one in which a lissome girl spins from a rope behind a translucent red curtain, have the feeling of saturated paintings coming to life. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. June 3 at 7, June 4 at 2 and 8, and June 5 at 1 and 7. Through July 10.)

"DANCEMOPOLITAN"
Dancenow/NYC's downtown cabaret series returns to Joe's Pub for a weekend of revelry, hosted by Aszure Barton and Robert Battle and featuring an eclectic battery of performers. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. June 3-4 at 9:30.)

"DANCING IN THE STREETS"
The annual summer site-specific outdoor festival kicks off with the joyous break-dance- and hip-hop-inflected moves of Rennie Harris Puremovement. (Coffey Park, Red Hook, Brooklyn. For more information, visit www.dancinginthestreets.org. No tickets necessary. June 4 at 6.)

BARBARA MAHLER
The choreographer presents an evening of new and repertory work, including "Fragments—Simple Separations" and "Random Thoughts," a series of subtly linked solos, duets, and trios, about one distinct moment. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. June 2-4 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK: "DER FREISCHÜTZ"
The operas of Carl Maria von Weber are the crucial link between the concentrated classicism of Mozart and the expansive Romanticism of Wagner. But they are rarely performed at the Metropolitan Opera, making this concert foray into the composer's most celebrated score, by Eve Queler's reliable outfit, all the more welcome. The cast holds promise: it features the tenor Thomas Studebaker, the Dutch soprano Charlotte Margiono (in her American début), the Met bass Vitalij Kowaljow, and the soprano Sandra Moon. (Carnegie Hall. 212-799-1982. June 6 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Newly minted as the first music director of the Santa Fe Opera, Alan Gilbert—a strong-gestured young maestro and the son of two Philharmonic musicians—comes home to lead the orchestra's début performances of both Dvořák's "The Noon Witch," a tone poem based on a harrowing Czech children's tale, and Henri Dutilleux's "Mystère de l'Instant," a series of ten crystalline modern snapshots. The orchestra's plangent principal cellist, Carter Brey, offers Barber's firmly lyrical Cello Concerto before one of Haydn's "Paris" symphonies (No. 90 in C Major) sends everyone home with a few jaunty tunes. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. June 2 and June 7 at 7:30, June 3 at 2, and June 4 at 8.)

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL: TAN DUN'S "WATER PASSION AFTER ST. MATTHEW"
The composer, one of classical music's great showmen, conducts his quasi-religious concert spectacle (with video), in which the sounds of Asian and Western string instruments are combined with those of a chorus, vocal soloists, and water percussion. The forces include the violinist Jennifer Koh, the Met bass Hao Jiang Tian, the Dessoff Choirs, and the Talujon percussion ensemble. (South Street Seaport, Pier 17, East River at Fulton St. June 1 at 8. No tickets required.)

"SOUND PROJECTIONS": THE "QATSI" TRILOGY
Lincoln Center's film-and-music series loops to its end with screenings of the director Godfrey Reggio's image-heavy "Qatsi" trilogy, a favorite of political activists and dorm-room stoners alike—with each film flaunting hypnotic minimalist scores by Philip Glass, performed live by the Philip Glass Ensemble. June 2 at 8: "Koyaanisqatsi" (1982), or "Life Out of Balance," is a cultish environmentalist anthem that sets Glass's music against a massive, sped-up montage of industrialism's crimes against nature. ♦ June 3 at 8: "Naqoyqatsi" (2002), or "Life As War," applies MTV-style visuals to a less coherent critique of our current technocracy; the Bang On a Can cellist Maya Beiser offers the solos in the undulating score's U.S. live première. ♦ June 4 at 8: "Powaqqatsi" (1987), or "Life in Transformation," more humbly chronicles the harsh social results of citification on continents other than North America and Europe. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC
Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts his lean and vibrant ensemble in two concerts, the last of the Lincoln Center season. June 3 at 8: An all-Russian program begins gracefully with Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" Suite and Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with the fiery Alexander Toradze) before veering off into the black depths of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, a chilling post-Stalinist musical chronicle. ♦ June 5 at 2: Tracy Silverman plays the electric-violin solos in the New York première of John Adams's blissed-out "Dharma at Big Sur," a prelude to the cool French sensuality of Ravel's complete ballet score "Daphnis et Chloé." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

CHORAL SYMPHONY SOCIETY: "SEMELE"
David Labovitz conducts his community chorus in a performance of Handel's oratorio, with the solo roles going to the members of the professional New York Cantata Singers. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. June 5 at 2. Tickets at the door.)

MUSICA SACRA CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA
Memorial music is the focus of Richard Westenburg's latest concert with his noted chorale, including Tavener's "Song for Athene" and Paulus's "Pilgrims' Hymn" (sung at the memorial services of Princess Diana and President Reagan, respectively) along with Purcell's "Funeral Music for Queen Mary" and the "Actus Tragicus," one of Bach's boldest and most expressive cantatas. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. 212-734-7688. June 6 at 7.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC
June 2-3 at 7:30: Some players well known for their exploits in new music—including the clarinettist Allen Blustine and the violinist and violist Curtis Macomber—begin a journey into works by Boulez and Messiaen (the "Quartet for the End of Time") with a little Mozart (the "Kegelstatt" Trio) thrown in. ♦ June 4 at 7:30 and June 5 at 4: An all-Beethoven program with the violinist Mark Peskanov, the cellist Colin Carr, and the pianist Gerald Robbins. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM: SIGRID TRUMMER
The esteemed Austrian pianist performs works by famous male composers (Brahms, Liszt, Zemlinsky,

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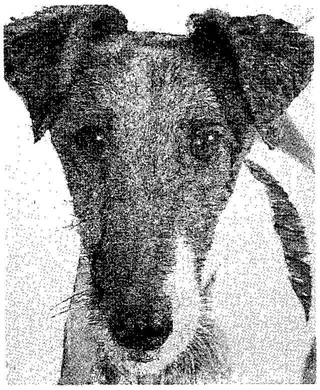


"HARRY," BY NANCY DROSD, 2005

Nancy Drosd's dog paintings began a year or so ago with a three-foot-wide likeness of a ten-inch toy poodle named Puccini—an "attack poodle" seen in extreme closeup, with its eyes touching the top of the canvas like Clint Eastwood's under that sombrero. Drosd, whose previous paintings, large-scale, fanatically detailed oil landscapes of Central Park, sometimes showed a leashed Lab or Peke on a distant path, calls Puccini her liberator, and she has followed with similar nose-first likenesses of subjects named Caliban and Zazi and Zoloft and Harry (above) and others she meets every day on the bridle path off East Ninetieth Street while walking her own Beato, an amiable *spinone italiano*. Drosd works slowly, with tiny brushes, building the picture hair by hair for several weeks—or, in the case of the hairy, patient Beato, longer. Quoting Bonnard (the painter, not the dog), she says that a painting is many little lies that add up to a great truth. The pack is on view until June 11 at the Tatistcheff gallery.

—*Roger Angell*

and Schoenberg) and by their comparatively obscure female students (including Agnes Tyrrell and Maria Hofer) in the Forum's sleek little wood-panelled concert hall. (11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300. June 2 at 8.)

"WEAVING JAPANESE SOUNDS"
The Piano Salon of Yamaha Artists Services is the venue for a concert surveying recent works for one and two pianos by such composers as Akemi Naito ("Rain, Calling Autumn"), Takashi Yoshimatsu, and others, performed by Chie Sato Roden and Sachiko Kato. (689 Fifth Ave., at 54th St. 212-339-9995. June 3 at 7:30.)

TAKA KIGAWA
The pianist, admired for his command of the most formidable contemporary scores, preludes a traversal of the complete Book II of Ligeti's Études with one of the work's great ancestors—the Op. 25 Études of Chopin. (Renee Weiler Concert Hall, 46 Barrow St. June 3 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

COUNTER)INDUCTION: "BIG SCIENCE"
The daring composer-performer collective (including the violinist Asmira Woodward-Page and the pianist Blair McMillen) closes its season with a program of electroacoustic music by Mario Davidovsky, Tristan Murail, Eric Moe, and Bernhard Gander (the U.S. première of "Poème Concret"). (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. June 3 at 8. A donation is suggested.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES
Several of the orchestra's excellent musicians gather to perform Schubert's "Trout" Quintet and the Sextet by Krzysztof Penderecki. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. June 5 at 3.)

MIDAMERICA PRODUCTIONS
Peter Tiboris's music concern, known for sponsoring a caravan of choruses at Carnegie Hall, also hosts some interesting smaller concerts at the venue's Weill Recital Hall. June 5 at 8:30: The pianist Simone Dinnerstein joins the Chiara String Quartet, a promising group recently out of Juilliard, for an evening of Beethoven (the third "Razumovsky" Quartet) and George Rochberg (the Piano Quintet). ♦ June 7 at 8: Greg Zuber, the principal percussionist of the Met Orchestra, offers a rangy program of recent works by Wuorinen, Takemitsu, Andriessen, Druckman, and Pärt; Linda Hall is the pianist. (212-247-7800.)

GEORGE PERLE NINETIETH-BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
Perle, one of the avatars of American twelve-tone music, might be thought of as a modernist Mendelssohn—a composer whose music deftly combines intellectual density with an elegant and lyrically graceful style. A crew of devoted musicians (including the soprano Lucy Shelton, the pianists Michael Boriskin and Horacio Gutiérrez, and the Dorian Wind Quintet) herald the composer's tenth decade with a concert featuring such works as "Thirteen Dickinson Songs" and "Nine Bagatelles" (for piano). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. June 7 at 8.)

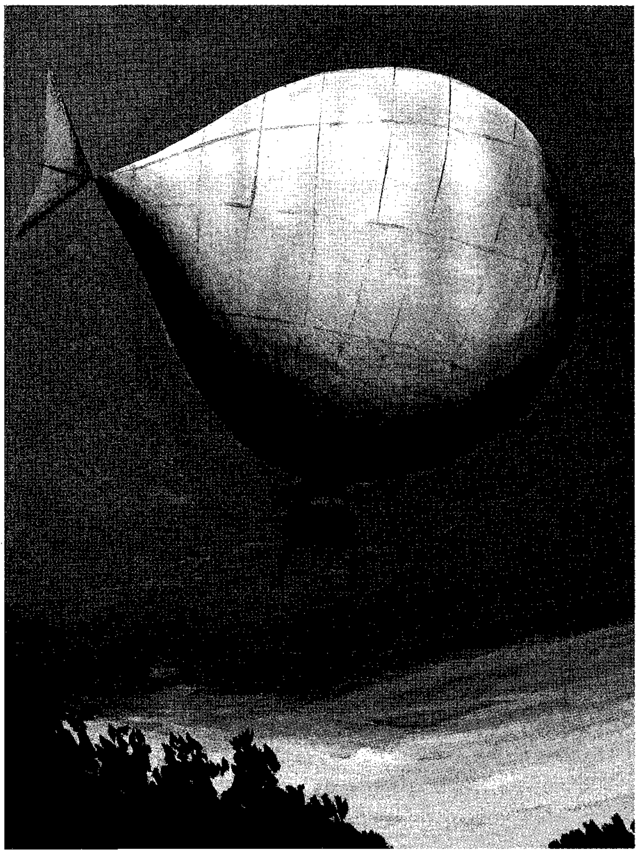
OUT OF TOWN

HUDSON VALLEY CHAMBER MUSIC CIRCLE
The annual series, a quiet interlude between the regular season and the onslaught of Leon Botstein's super-sized Bard Summerscape schedule, begins with a program of the Brahms String Sextets offered by some matchless chamber-music performers: the violinists Jaime Laredo and Ida Kavafian, the violists Michael Tree and Steven Tenenbom, and the cellists Sharon Robinson and Peter Wiley. (Olin Hall, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 518-537-6665. June 4 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

APRÈS VOUS
In a romantic comedy directed by Pierre Salvadori, a waiter saves a man from committing suicide and then feels responsible for his happiness. With Daniel Auteuil, José Garcia, and Sandrine Kiberlain. In French. Opening June 3. (New York Twin and Quad Cinema.)

CATERINA IN THE BIG CITY
When a small-town girl moves to Rome, she must negotiate the politically divided social order at her new private school. Directed by Paolo Virzì. In Italian. Opening June 3. (Sunshine Cinema.)



Werner Herzog's "The White Diamond," at Film Forum.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

CINDERELLA MAN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 3. (In wide release.)

DEEP BLUE
A documentary on the history of the earth's oceans, directed by Andy Byatt and Alastair Fothergill. Narrated by Michael Gambon. Opening June 3. (Angelika Film Center.)

LORDS OF DOGTOWN
Catherine Hardwicke ("Thirteen") directed and Stacy Peralta wrote this drama about the Venice Beach kids who paved the way for the rebirth of skateboarding in the seventies. Opening June 3. (In wide release.)

MILWAUKEE, MINNESOTA
A champion ice fisherman falls prey to money-hungry drifters, in a drama directed by Allan Mindel. With Troy Garity, Alison Folland, Randy Quaid, and Bruce Dern. Opening June 3. (Angelika Film Center.)

OR (MY TREASURE)
Keren Yedaya directed this drama about a mother and daughter who struggle to stay out of prostitution. In Hebrew. Opening June 1. (Film Forum.)

ROCK SCHOOL
A documentary about a school of rock music for children in Philadelphia. Opening June 3. (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS
Based on the teen novel by Ann Brashares, about four lifelong friends who are separated for the summer for the first time. With Amber Tamblyn, America Ferrera, Blake Lively, and Alexis Bledel. Opening June 1. (In wide release.)

THE WHITE DIAMOND
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 1. (Film Forum.)

NOW PLAYING

À TOUT DE SUITE
In 1975, Lili (Isild Le Besco), a quiet upper-bourgeois Parisian girl bored with her twin roles as daughter and art student, abruptly takes up with a handsome, gentle-looking boy (Ouassini Embarek) of Moroccan descent. The boy turns out to be a bank robber. Wanted by the police, he takes her off to Spain, Morocco, and then Greece, where he abandons her and she drifts around on her own. Based on the actual experience of Elisabeth Fanger (who wrote a memoir called "When I Was 19"), Benoît Jacquot's film holds our interest with the arbitrariness of its heroine's behavior. In the movie's proud refusal to explain or open up the characters, one can discern decades of French dedication to the *acte gratuit* as well as to elements of the terse anti-psychological dramaturgy favored by the New Wave directors. Jacquot shoots his tale in rather muddy, low-contrast black-and-white, and his young star's expressions alternate between radiant longing and a blankness so complete that one wonders at times if the heroine isn't merely stupid. This surly celebration of freedom isn't really satisfying or fun, but, then, it's not intended to be. In French.—*David Denby* (Angelika Film Center.)

BITTER VICTORY
Nicholas Ray's Second World War drama from 1957 stars Richard Burton as Captain Leith of the British Army, who is sent on a commando mission in German-occupied Libya. Leith's commander is Major Brand (Curt Jurgens), a by-the-book martinet married to Jane (Ruth Roman), who is Leith's former lover and still his beloved. The desert combat strips life and death to an elemental cruelty; in Ray's harsh world view, nature itself is hostile to Leith, a free-thinking loner and a classic Ray anti-hero (intellectual, insubordinate, and seething with rage). Ray avoids dramatic fireworks, and presses horror and heartbreak into images of mute despair. The credit sequence alone, with its static rows of faceless combat-training dummies, suggests the blank violence that will follow.—*Richard Brody* (Pioneer Theatre; June 4.)

CLAIRE'S KNEE
The air is thick with summer and leisure in Eric Rohmer's serene story of a vacationing diplomat (Jean-Claude Brialy) who says he is interested only in women's minds and then has an "undefined desire" to stroke a young girl's knee. There's a rather enigmatic woman novelist who stands in for the director and makes ponderous remarks, but Rohmer's quiet, complacent movie-novel game is pleasing, and a captivatingly gawky teen-age actress, Béatrice Romand, who plays a subsidiary role, looks like a Pisanello princess. With Laurence de Monaghan as Claire and Aurora Cornu as the novelist. Cinematography by Nestor Almendros. In French. Released in 1970.—*Pauline Kael* (Moving Image; June 4-5.)

CRASH
A brazenly alive and heartbreaking film about the rage and foolishness of intolerance—the mutual abrasions of white, black, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Asian citizens in the great and strange city of

Los Angeles. The movie starts off with separate vignettes in which the characters run afoul of each other, say things better left unsaid, and get into terrible trouble. Later, they cross paths again, sometimes in bizarre coincidences that feel exactly right; some of these scenes play out at the edge of insanity, where contentiousness spills over into tragedy or farce. The furiously candid screenplay was written by Paul Haggis and Robert Moresco, and the picture was directed by Haggis, who, in his first time out as director, demonstrates an amazing skill with actors. Don Cheadle, as a withdrawn, melancholy police detective, is the star, and the other players include Terrence Howard and Thandie Newton as an upper-class African-American couple, Brendan Fraser and Sandra Bullock as an L.A. district attorney and his bitchy wife, Chris (Ludacris) Bridges and Larenz Tate as carjackers, Matt Dillon and Ryan Phillippe as cops, and Shaun Toub as an Iranian shopkeeper who thinks everyone is out to cheat him. The gentle electronic score is by Mark Isham.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/2/05.) (In wide release.)

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
A bold, not to say foolhardy, attempt to divert the work of Douglas Adams, with its flood of ruminative wit, into a mainstream movie. Martin Freeman stars as Arthur Dent, your basic tetchy Brit, who is dragged along by his un-British—indeed, unhuman—friend Ford Prefect (Mos Def) on a trip through some of the more risible highlights of deep space. If you are not familiar with the conceit of the "Hitchhiker" franchise, whose previous incarnations include a radio series, four novels, and a TV show, you should find much to relish in the revelation that other worlds can be just as wearisome and mismanaged as this one. Many gags, ranging from Marvin the suicidal robot (voiced by Alan Rickman) to the Babel fish that you insert into one ear if you wish to understand all languages, survive, yet the film feels frantic and scattershot, and its rush toward a happy ending is wholly alien, as it were, to the wry pessimism of the original. Most of the cast, understandably, have a stranded and bewildered air, with the exception of Bill Nighy; he plays Slartibartfast, a donnish designer of planetary coastlines who once won an award for Norway.—*Anthony Lane* (5/9/05) (In wide release.)

THE HOLY GIRL
Amalia (María Alche), a radiantly beautiful teenager growing up in a family-run hotel in a small Argentine city, is pulled between traditional religious teachings that insist on a saintlike career for women and sexual longings that are just as fierce as a teenage boy's. When a doctor attending a conference rubs up against her in a crowd, she reaches out to him, but he doesn't want an affair; he just wants to touch. Lucrecia Martel's gently comic movie is not about perversion; it's about the varieties of intimacy—between mothers and daughters, teen-age girls, doctors and patients. Martel shoots her movie with rapt attention to faces and bodies in the foreground while the life of the hotel spins loosely in the background. It's a distinctive visual style, but it's not a dramatic style, and the movie, for all its talent, isn't pulled together enough. Yet Martel is someone to watch: she has a fantastic eye for detail and mood. With Mercedes Morán as the heroine's divorced mother and Carlos Belloso as the doctor. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN
At the butt end of the twelfth century, a blacksmith (Orlando Bloom) follows his noble father (Liam Neeson) to Jerusalem, in search of salvation, wealth, and adventure, though not necessarily in that order. He is shipwrecked en route, emerging from the wreck with the bleary air of a groom awaking from a successful stag party. This is one of many underpowered moments in the film, which, despite being directed by Ridley Scott, contrives to make a great and often magnificent fuss about the doings of a feeble hero; in this respect it is the very opposite of Scott's "Gladiator," which worked hard to earn its bombast. Much is made of the power play between the King of Jerusalem (a leper in a metal mask), his exotic and plainly loopy sis-

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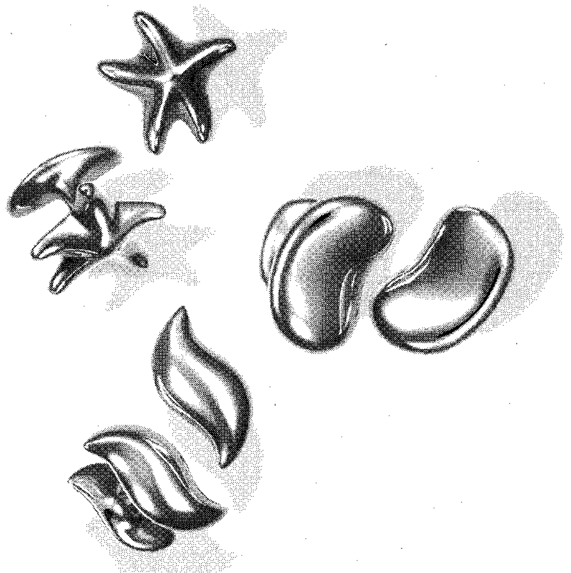

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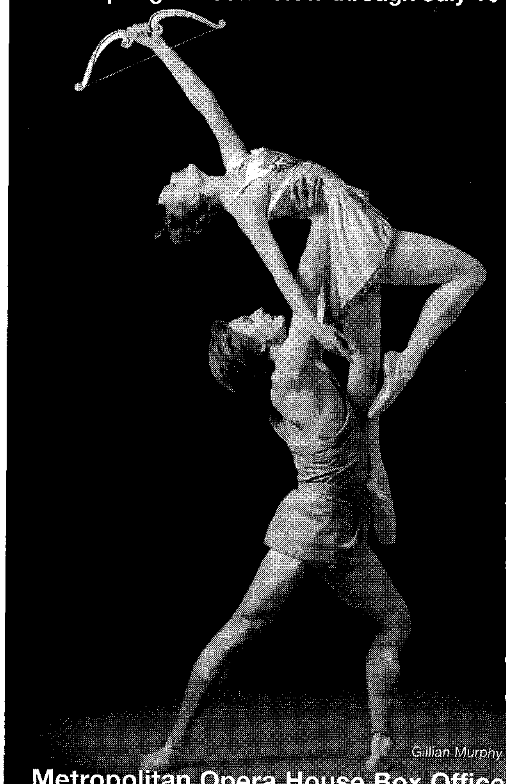


Sylvia
U.S. Premiere
Opens June 3

Sir Frederick Ashton's two-act idyllic jewel is a star vehicle for its heroine, showcasing her in a marathon of virtuosic dancing amid a variety of guises – from Amazonian huntress to seductive temptress to, at last, a woman transformed by love – all set to Léo Delibes' splendid score.

June 3, 4, 6, 13, 14 & 15 at 8pm
June 4 & 15 at 2pm

Gillian Murphy and Maxim Beloserkovsky in *Sylvia*. Photo by Marty Sohl.

Metropolitan Opera House Box Office | 212.362.6000 | www.abt.org
64th St. and Broadway; Sun 12 - 6 pm, Mon - Sat 10 am - 8 pm

ter (Eva Green), his military adviser (Jeremy Irons), and a brace of leering villains (Marton Csokas and Brendan Gleeson). Opposing them is the mighty Saladin (Ghassan Massoud) and, more injurious still, the filmmakers' anxiety about causing offense to the faithful of any creed. The outcome is a movie so desperate to provoke comparisons with the religious enmities of today that it somehow forgets the fire in its own belly. With Edward Norton.—*A.L.* (5/9/05) (In wide release.)

KINGS AND QUEEN
Nora (Emmanuelle Devos), a Parisian bourgeoise and gallery manager in her late thirties, goes to Grenoble to visit her father, a famous writer and teacher who is looking after Nora's son for the summer. At the same time, Nora's ex-boyfriend Ismaël (Mathieu Amalric), a manic-depressive with bright eyes and the eager manner of a cocky teenager, argues merrily with two orderlies who arrive at his apartment to cart him off to the loony bin. A violist in a string quartet, Ismaël is a brilliant clown who finds his own rants so amusing that once he gets started he can't stop himself. The two narratives never really come together, which is a bit of a surprise. Over the years, we have seen so many French films that have made a fetish of precision that it's startling to see something that is free-wheeling, explosive, and rather slovenly. Directed and co-written by Arnaud Desplechin, "Kings and Queen" is, by any normal standard, a mess, yet the movie is full of rhetorical excitement and brilliant moments. The music careers alarmingly from Henry Mancini to Anton Webern. In French, English, and German.—*D.D.* (5/16/05) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

LAYER CAKE
A muddled but exciting crime thriller, starring the British actor Daniel Craig, that relies on that old plot perennial: the last big job before retirement. Directed stylishly by Matthew Vaughn, the movie has the flavor of a good pulp novel. The complex story, filled with twists and turns, concerns the unloading of a cache of stolen drugs and the search for the runaway daughter of a crime boss. Craig, following in the footsteps of actors like Paul Bettany (in "Gangster No. 1") and Clive Owen (in "Croupier"), delivers a smoldering performance that is effortless and subtle. With Michael Gambon in a showstopping role as a not-to-be-argued-with crime lord.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

MADAGASCAR
In DreamWorks' latest attempt at an animated blockbuster, four overcivilized animals from the Central Park Zoo get transported to the wilds of Madagascar. It's a good comic premise, and much of the animation is beautiful, but the filmmakers don't follow through on their ideas. When the kvetching New Yorkers hit the jungle, we hope to see how their peculiar urban skills will allow them to deal with the creeping and crawling terrors. A few cobwebs cling to them, but the chief menace, the Foosas—nasty, hyena-like creatures—turn out to be pussycats. Great visuals, lousy plot. With Ben Stiller as Alex the lion, Chris Rock as Marty, a zebra who horses around too much, David Schwimmer as a hypochondriacal giraffe, and Jada Pinkett Smith as a commonsensical hippo. Directed by Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath.—*D.D.* (5/30/05) (In wide release.)

MAD HOT BALLROOM
Marilyn Agrelo's documentary follows three competing groups of fifth graders as they learn the music and the steps of swing, the rumba, the tango, and other ballroom dances. A picture of New York kid culture (Dominican students from Washington Heights, upscale kids from Tribeca, Italians and Asians from Bensonhurst), the film focusses not only on the buoyant work of the contestants but also on their dedicated teachers. Agrelo's filmmaking provides telling glimpses of the students' home lives, and she avoids any cloying sentiment. What she captures is a moving, joyous childhood escapade.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

MONSTER-IN-LAW
In this comedy set in L.A., there are banks of flowers everywhere—great rolling tapestries of petals laid out in private homes, on the sets of TV talk shows, in restaurants. In case we missed the blooming-and-blossoming theme, the heroine, Charlie (Jennifer Lopez), a Venice Beach free spirit who works as a dog-walker, caterer, and temp, also paints floral whatnots on the walls of her apartment. Charlie, in an equivalent to Ben Stiller's role in "Meet the Parents," falls in love with a dreamboat (Michael Vartan) and has to do battle with his drunkenly possessive mother, played by the great Jane Fonda, who, in a misguided "comeback," gives a performance so strenuous that it's almost unwatchable. O.K., it's silly to get upset. "Monster-in-Law" is just a commercial product, as squarely aimed at teenage girls as an advertisement for pink cell phones. Still, the self-confident fatuity and condescension of the entire show are offensive. The two lovers don't have an idea, an opinion, a trace of wit—all they want to do is cuddle and disappear into the petunias-and-roses California kitsch. Written by Anya Kochoff and directed by Robert Luketic.—*D.D.* (5/16/05) (In wide release.)

THE NINTH DAY
The remarkable German actor Ulrich Matthes, with his spooked, black-eyed stare, burns with rage and mortification in the role of Henri Kremer, an anti-Nazi Catholic priest from Luxembourg who was interned at Dachau in 1942. Kremer (based on the real-life Father Jean Bernard) is granted a leave to go home, where he falls into the hands of another theological personality—the S.S. officer Gebhardt (August Diehl), who has transferred his love of God to love of the Reich. The S.S. wants to use Kremer to convince Luxembourg Catholics that they should support the German Occupation. This film, written by Eberhard Görner and Andreas Pflüger and directed by Volker Schlöndorff, is grim but powerful, and it opens up a new movie subject for American audiences—the sufferings of the anti-Nazi Catholic clergy at the lower levels. In the mid-winter grayness of northern Europe—not a trace of red or blue anywhere—the light seems to have gone out, but at least one soul remains incandescent. In German and French.—*D.D.* (5/30/05) (Metro Twin and Quad Cinema.)

PORCO ROSSO
Funny, touching, and fiercely nostalgic, the Japanese animation genius Hayao Miyazaki's oddball 1992 adventure about an Italian flying ace with the head of a pig packs a flabbergasting romantic punch. Porco Rosso, a hard-bitten veteran, insists that all the good fliers died in the Great War and suspects that God transformed him into a pig-man to punish him for surviving it. Refusing to serve the Fascist government, he ekes out a living as a bounty hunter tracking down pirates. The action hinges on a couple of prolonged skirmishes between Porco and an American champ in the pirates' employ (the climax is a slapstick corker), but it's Porco's earthy, wised-up heroism and his loving devotion to an innkeeper and singer named Gina that give the film its thumping heart. Miyazaki brings out the robust emotion in Porco's billowing figure and the spiritual delicacy in Gina's lissome one and sets both against shimmering seascapes fit for a modern age of legend. And Miyazaki springs surprises that capture the otherworldliness of aviation better than almost any live-action film.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; June 4.)

STAR WARS—EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH
That's all, folks. After five front-line reports from a galaxy far, far away, George Lucas has come to the end of his tale—or, rather, gone back to where he began. For devotees, it will signal a fond and snuffling farewell, as they bid adieu to a vast parade of clones, Ewoks, Darths, tragic hair styles, noble knights, and strangely fastidious androids. For the rest of us, there will be nothing but inexpressible relief. It is true that this sixth film marks an improvement upon the last two efforts, whose combined soullessness was enough to induce paralysis, but Lucas remains wedded to a hollow, antiseptic vision of other worlds, coupled with a determination to draw the glummest possible performance from otherwise talented actors. Hayden Christensen plays Anakin Skywalker, who is increasingly lured toward what he calls the dark side and what the rest of us would call frowning. Aiding him is the corrupt Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid), the Chancellor of the Republic, while those trying to thwart our hero's crossover include his pregnant wife (Natalie Portman) and, of course, Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), who is himself thwarted by an unspeakable British accent. There are frantic duels, murderous dialogue, and a final, fetishistic transformation of trashed Jedi into evil lord, but the suspicion remains that Lucas has left deep space a far shallower place than he found it.—*A.L.* (5/23/05) (In wide release.)

UNLEASHED
Jet Li gets to exercise his acting chops along with his impeccable martial-arts skills in this unapologeti-

DVD NOTES
AFTER THE SILENCE

Though the silent era was winding down by 1930, its classical aesthetic lived on in the sound films of its luminaries, nowhere more than in the five directed by Charles Chaplin. The last one, "A Countess from Hong Kong," from 1967, is part of the new "**Marlon Brando 4-Movie Collection**" (Universal). In this surprisingly austere drawing-room comedy, the heroine (Sophia Loren) stows away in the cabin of an American diplomat (Brando) onboard a ship headed from Hong Kong to Hawaii. Chaplin not only delights in the refinement of ancien-régime manners but sharply contrasts them with the undignified pratfalls that result from efforts to conform to bourgeois propriety. (In a way, the film is Chaplin's critique of pure slapstick.) As the countess and the diplomat rise to a quiet realization of a great love, the film draws vast power from their dammed-up flood of emotion. The film ends with Brando and Loren in the romantic grip of a tango; their severe grace embodies the self-mastery required of gallant lovers—and of supremely virtuosic artists like Chaplin himself—in making it look effortlessly natural.

When Manoel de Oliveira called his 2003 movie "**A Talking Picture**" (Kino on Video), he knew whereof he spoke. Born in 1908, he is likely the only director working today who started his career at the end of the silent era. In the film, set in July, 2001, a history professor (Leonor Silveira) and her daughter (Filipa de Almeida) cruise from Portugal to Bombay, with sightseeing stopovers at Pompeii, Athens, Istanbul, Cairo, and Aden. The sea voyage turns into a horrific allegory of September 11th as well as a forthright vision of the threat to artistic and intellectual culture posed by terrorism, which freezes the civilized conversation of the ship's polyglot captain (John Malkovich) into the silence of Munch's mute scream. Oliveira's long view of history derives from the cinema itself: if the silent cinema is akin to the classical age, Oliveira has witnessed millennia of change in a single lifetime.

—*Richard Brody*

cally silly action film. Li plays a mad dog of a man who's been raised from childhood to become a killer for a Glasgow gangster (played with great relish by Bob Hoskins). After Li escapes his tormentors, he's befriended by a blind musician (Morgan Freeman) who shows him a bit of kindness and a good meal. When Hoskins's gang sets out to reclaim Li, the mayhem begins. The fight scenes are choreographed by the brilliant Yuen Woo Ping ("Kill Bill," "Kung Fu Hustle"), and the director, Louis Leterrier, wisely stays out of the way of the flying furniture.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BOMB THE SYSTEM: Cinema Village. **THE LONGEST YARD:** In wide release. **KICKING & SCREAMING:** In wide release. **SAVING FACE:** Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—New filmmakers. June 1 at 8: "Sex & Sushi" (2004, Rob Lawton). ♦ "Eye & Ear Controlled Presents." June 1 at 8: Phill Niblock's early films (1966-69). ♦ June 2 at 8: Short films by Mauricio Kagel (1967-68). ♦ June 3 at 8: Short films by Mauricio Kagel (1965-1981). ♦ June 4 at 5: "2 Man Orchestra" (1973, Kagel). ♦ June 4 at 8: "Tactile" (1970, Kagel) and "Hallelujah" (1968, Kagel). ♦ June 5 at 5: Short films by Mauricio Kagel (1979-89). ♦ June 5 at 8: "Ludwig Van" (1969, Kagel). ♦ Palm Pictures films. June 2 at 7 and 9:30: "Dolls" (2002, Takeshi Kitano; in Japanese). ♦ June 3 at 7 and 9: "Bright Future" (2003, Kiyoshi Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ June 4-5 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Dig!" (2004, Ondi Timoner). ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 4 at 2: "Listen to Britain" (1942, Humphrey Jennings), "Ménilmontant" (1926, Dimitri Kirsanoff; silent), "Ballet Mécanique" (1924, Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy; silent), and "Entr'acte" (1924, René Clair; silent). ♦ June 5 at 2:30: "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son" (1969, Ken Jacobs).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through June 29: "Village Voice Best of 2004." June 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "I ♥ Huckabees" (2004, David O. Russell). ♦ June 2 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Vento di Terra" (2004, Vincenzo Marra; in Italian). ♦ June 3 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Pin Boy" (2004, Ana Poliak; in Spanish). ♦ June 4 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Café Lumière" (2004, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Japanese and English). ♦ "Eugène Green: A Baroque World." June 5 at 3, 6, and 9:15: "Le Pont des Arts" (2004, Eugène Green; in French). ♦ June 6 at 7: "The Manchurian Candidate" (2004, Jonathan Demme). ♦ June 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Primer" (2004, Shane Carruth).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—June 1-7 at 1:20, 3:25, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "The Two of Us" (1967, Claude Berri; in French).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Occupation of France Series." June 7 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Fantastic Night" (1942, Marcel L'Herbier; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through June 20: "To Save and Project: The Third MOMA International Festival of Film Preservation." June 1 at 6: "Witchfinder General/The Conqueror Worm" (1968, Michael Reeves). ♦ June 1 at 6:30: "Before Mickey: Early Animation Masterworks from George Eastman House" (1916-28). ♦ June 1 at 8: "The Abyss" (1910, Urban Gad; silent) and "The Devil's Circus" (1926, Benjamin Christensen; silent). ♦ June 1 at 8:30: "A Car-Tune Portrait" (1937, Dave Fleischer) and "True Confession" (1937, Wesley Ruggles). ♦ June 2 at 6: Short films from Switzerland (1923-1928; silent). ♦ June 2 at 6:30: "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House" (1948, H. C. Potter). ♦ June 2 at 8:15: "Scorsese Presents 'Before the Revolution' " (2004, Martin Scorsese) and "Before the Revolution" (1964, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian). ♦ June 2 at 8:30: "Dry Wood" (1973, Les Blank), "Always for Pleasure" (1978, Blank), and "Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe" (1979, Blank). ♦ June 4 at 2: "Le Pied Qui Étreint" (1916, Jacques Feyder; silent). ♦ June 4 at 4: "Visages d'Enfants" (1925, Feyder; silent). ♦ June 4 at 6:30: "Gribiche" (1925, Feyder; silent). ♦ June 4 at 8:45: "L'Atlantide" (1920, Feyder; silent). ♦ June 5 at 2: "Night Nurse" (1931, William A. Wellman). ♦ June 5 at 3:30: "A Cottage on Dartmoor" (1929, Anthony Asquith; silent). ♦ June 5 at 5:30: "Underground" (1928, Asquith; silent). ♦ June 6 at 5: "Kaliya Mardan" (1919, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke; silent). ♦ June 6 at 5:15: "Harry and the Butler" (1961, Bent Christensen; in Danish). ♦ Through June 30: "Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata: Masters of Animation." June 3 at 6: "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind" (1984, Miyazaki). ♦ June 3 at 8:30: "My Neighbors the Yamadas" (1999, Takahata). ♦ June 4 at 2: "Pom Poko" (1994, Takahata). ♦ June 4 at 5: "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988, Miyazaki). ♦ June 4 at 7:30: "Porco Rosso" (†). ♦ June 5 at 2: "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989, Miyazaki). ♦ June 5 at 5: "Grave of the Fireflies" (1988, Takahata). ♦ June 6 at 8:30: "Howl's Moving Castle" (2004, Miyazaki). ♦ Films preserved by the Women's Film Preservation Fund. June 3 at 6: Short films by Mary Ellen Bute, Gunvor Nelson, Louise Alaimo, Judy Smith, Ellen Sorin, Storm de Hirsh, and Maya Deren (1940-90). ♦ June 3 at 8:30: Short films by Alice Guy-Blaché, Francis Ford, Meredith Monk, and Spencer Williams (1913-79).

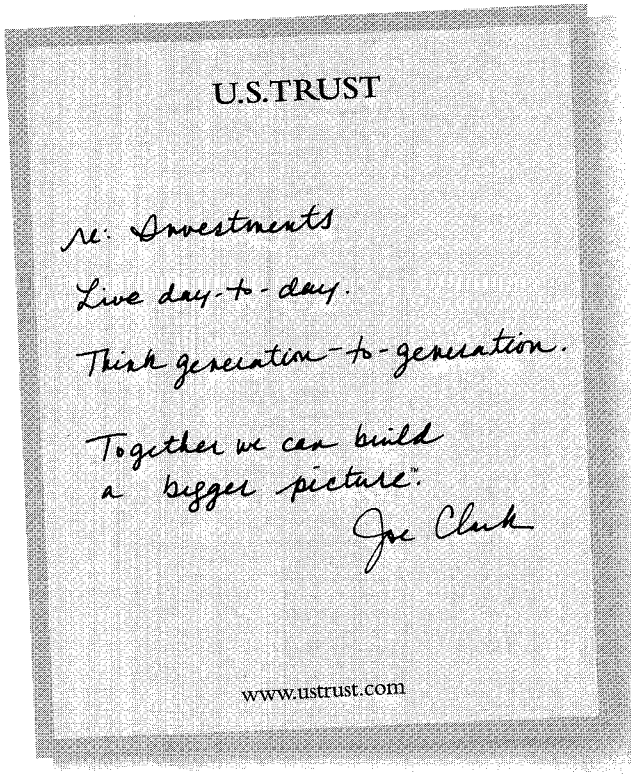
MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Asian Cinevisions." June 3 at 7:30: "The Gathering" (2003, Nia Di Nata; in Indonesian). ♦ A François Ozon retrospective. All films are in French. June 4 at 2: "8 Women" (2002). ♦ June 4 at 4: "Swimming Pool" (2003). ♦ June 5 at 2: Short films by François Ozon (1995-98). ♦ June 5 at 4: "5 x 2" (2004), followed by a discussion with Ozon. ♦ Repertory nights. June 4-5: "Claire's Knee" (†).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—Three films by Nicholas Ray. June 1 at 7: "In a Lonely Place" (1950). ♦ June 2 at 7: "Hot Blood" (1956). ♦ June 4 at 7: "Bitter Victory" (†). ♦ Première. June 1-7 at 9: "Invisible" (2005, Konstantin Bojanov). ♦ Pioneer late nights. June 3 at 10:35: "Primer" (2004, Shane Carruth). ♦ June 3 at midnight: "Steamboy" (2004, Katsuhiro Ōtomo; in Japanese). ♦ June 4 at 10:35: "The Evil Dead" (1981, Sam Raimi). ♦ June 4 at midnight: "Save the Green Planet" (2003, Jang Jun-Hwan; in Korean). ♦ Special screening. June 5 at 5: "Little Fugitive" (1953, Morris Engel, Ruth Orkin, and Ray Ashley). ♦ "Monster Mondays." June 6 at 7: "Dead Meat" (2004, Conor McMahon).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. June 3-4: "Once Upon a Time in the West" (1968, Sergio Leone).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—June 5 at 4 and June 7 at 8:15: "Downfall" (2004, Oliver Hirschbiegel; in German). ♦ June 5 at 7 and June 7 at 6: "La Strada" (1954, Federico Fellini; in Italian).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through June 9: New Italian films. All films are in Italian. June 1 at 2 and 6:30 and June 5 at 9:15: "La Febbre" (2005, Alessandro D'Alatri). ♦ June 1 at 4:10 and June 5 at 2:45: "I Truly Respect You" (2004, Eugenio Cappuccio). ♦ June 1 at 9:15 and June 4 at 12:30: "Love Me" (2004, Renato De Maria). ♦ June 2 at 2 and 8:40, June 5 at 12:30, and June 6 at 1: "Smalltown, Italy" (2004, Stefano Mordini). ♦ June 2 at 4:25 and June 6 at 9:10: "How We Wreaked Havoc on the Italian Cinema" (2004, Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco). ♦ June 2 at 6:15, June 3 at 4:20, and June



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6 at 3:10: “Radio Alice” (2004, Guido Chiesa). ♦ June 3 at 1 and June 4 at 2:30: “Our Thirty Years: Meeting a New Generation” (2005, Giovanna Taviani). ♦ June 3 at 2:20 and 6:45: “The Consequences of Love” (2004, Paolo Sorrentino). ♦ June 3 at 9, June 5 at 4:45, and June 7 at 2: “Love Is Eternal While It Lasts” (2004, Carlo Verdone). ♦ June 4 at 4, June 6 at 5:20, and June 7 at 4:15: “A Private Silence” (2004, Stefano Rulli). ♦ June 4 at 6 and June 6 at 7: “The Remains of Nothing” (2004, Antonietta de Lillo). ♦ June 4 at 8:15 and June 7 at 8:30: “Cefalonia” (2005, Riccardo Milani). ♦ June 5 at 7 and June 7 at 6:15: “Changing Destiny” (2004, Daniele Gaglianone). ♦ “Sound Projections: A Festival of Music and the Moving Image.” June 2 at 8: “Koyaanisqatsi” (1983, Godfrey Reggio). ♦ June 3 at 8: “Naqoyqatsi” (2002, Reggio). ♦ June 4 at 8: “Powaqqatsi” (1988, Reggio).

READINGS AND TALKS

"THE QUESTION OF TORTURE"
The writers Mark Bowden (“Black Hawk Down”), Mark Danner (“Torture and Truth”), Darius Rejali (“Torture and Democracy”), and Elaine Scarry (“The Body in Pain”) discuss the ramifications of extracting information through physical or psychological violence. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-868-4444. June 1 at 7.)

ROSAMOND BERNIER
In conjunction with the Metropolitan Museum’s Max Ernst retrospective, the journalist and longtime friend of the Surrealist painter talks about Ernst’s life and work. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-535-7710. June 3 at 6.)

FRANÇOIS OZON
Following a screening of his latest Stateside release, “5 x 2,” the French art-house director talks with David Schwartz, the chief curator of film at the Museum of the Moving Image, which is presenting a retrospective of his works. (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria, Queens. 718-784-4520. June 5 at 4.)

"SONG OF MYSELF"
In an inclusive spirit that Walt Whitman would truly appreciate, his classic poem is read alfresco by ordinary New Yorkers from the decks of the tall ship Peking. (South Street Seaport Museum, 12 Fulton St. June 5 at 5. To sign up as a prospective reader, e-mail songofmyself2005@yahoo.com.)

LEN BERMAN
The television sportscaster dishes about Barry Bonds, Mickey Mantle, Bobby Orr, Bill Parcells, and other sports heroes in his new book, “Spanning the World.” On June 7 at 8:15, he does it in front of a live audience at the 92nd Street Y. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

RED HOOK WATERFRONT ARTS FESTIVAL
The bohemian feel of this rough-edged Brooklyn neighborhood may be about to dissipate: an Ikea and a Fairway are in the works, and the city recently announced that the Queen Mary 2 will soon be docking here. Before that happens, though, the Haitian percussionist Bonga and the Vodou Jazz Ensemble headline the eleventh annual gathering of dancers, poets, musicians, and other performers. (Beard Street Pier. For more information, call 718-287-2224. June 4 from 1 to 5:30.)

"CIRCUS SUNDAYS"
More evidence of Red Hook’s independent artistic spirit can be found at the Waterfront Museum, which is located in a 1914 Lehigh Valley Railroad barge at the foot of Conover Street. This month it will present jugglers, magicians, and other refugees from the big top. (Sundays in June at noon, 2:30, and 5. For more information, visit www.waterfrontmuseum.org.)

MUSEUM MILE FESTIVAL
Fifth Avenue becomes a car-free stage complete with bands and performance artists as nine of the city’s top museums—from the Metropolitan to El Museo del Barrio—open their doors for the evening. (June 7, from 6 to 9. For more information, visit www.museummilefestival.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
A sale of carpets at **Sotheby’s** on June 3 is a poignant reminder of the complex cultural heritage of Central Asia and the Middle East. In a small Akstafa prayer rug (circa 1880) from the eastern Caucasus, interlocking patches of green, gold, and vermillion create a vibrating visual plane upon which the pious may bow before the Almighty; a late-nineteenth-century Kashan carpet from central Iran depicts a thick garden of twisting vines and flowers in full bloom. A sale of antiquities follows on June 7. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie’s** House Sale, a monthly event geared toward decorators, features its usual eclectic mix of moderately priced items on June 2-3, such as a pair of Chinese white glazed earthenware vases, a Mexican flat-weave rug, and a variety of paintings. The June 4 sale of wine, however, is strikingly sumptuous: for a price, patrons can not only participate in an early-morning tasting but also indulge in a “boardroom lunch” with fellow connoisseurs. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
STEIN ONSTAGE
June 15-18

At Symphony Space, Nancy Rhodes’s Encompass New Opera Theatre presents three short operas connected to Gertrude Stein: Ned Rorem’s “Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters” and Virgil Thomson’s “Capital Capitals” (both with text by Stein) along with the world première of “Gertrude Stein Invents a Jump Early On,” a jazz-influenced opera by the poet Karren LaLonde Alenier and the composer William Banfield. (212-864-5400.)

NIGHT LIFE
OASIS
June 22

The brothers Gallagher return with a new album, “Don’t Believe the Truth,” and plenty of churlishness. After the band’s label picked “Lyla” as the first single, Noel objected to the choice in typical four-letter fashion. In concert at Madison Square Garden, the band can open with any song it likes. (212-307-7171.)

ART
WAR IS HELL
June 24

A new show at the Neue Galerie, “War/Hell: Master Prints by Otto Dix and Max Beckmann,” presents two complete folios of prints made by the artists in response to the First World War. Beckmann created his lithographs in 1919; Dix’s prints were published in 1924. (212-628-6200.)

DANCE
MARK MORRIS
June 26-27

Mark Morris Dance Group returns to Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood to première “Cargo,” a new dance set to Darius Milhaud’s “La Création du Monde.” The troupe will also present “Mosaic and United,” with music by Henry Cowell, and “Lucky Charms,” with music by Jacques Ibert. (617-266-1200.)

READINGS AND TALKS
TALKING PRETTY
July 5

The humorist David Sedaris recently edited “Children Playing Before a Statue of Hercules,” a selection of short stories by Alice Munro, Charles Baxter, Joyce Carol Oates, and others that benefits 826NYC, a volunteer tutoring organization in Brooklyn. Many of the contributing authors will join Sedaris and his co-host, Sarah Vowell, at Cooper Union. (212-279-4200.)

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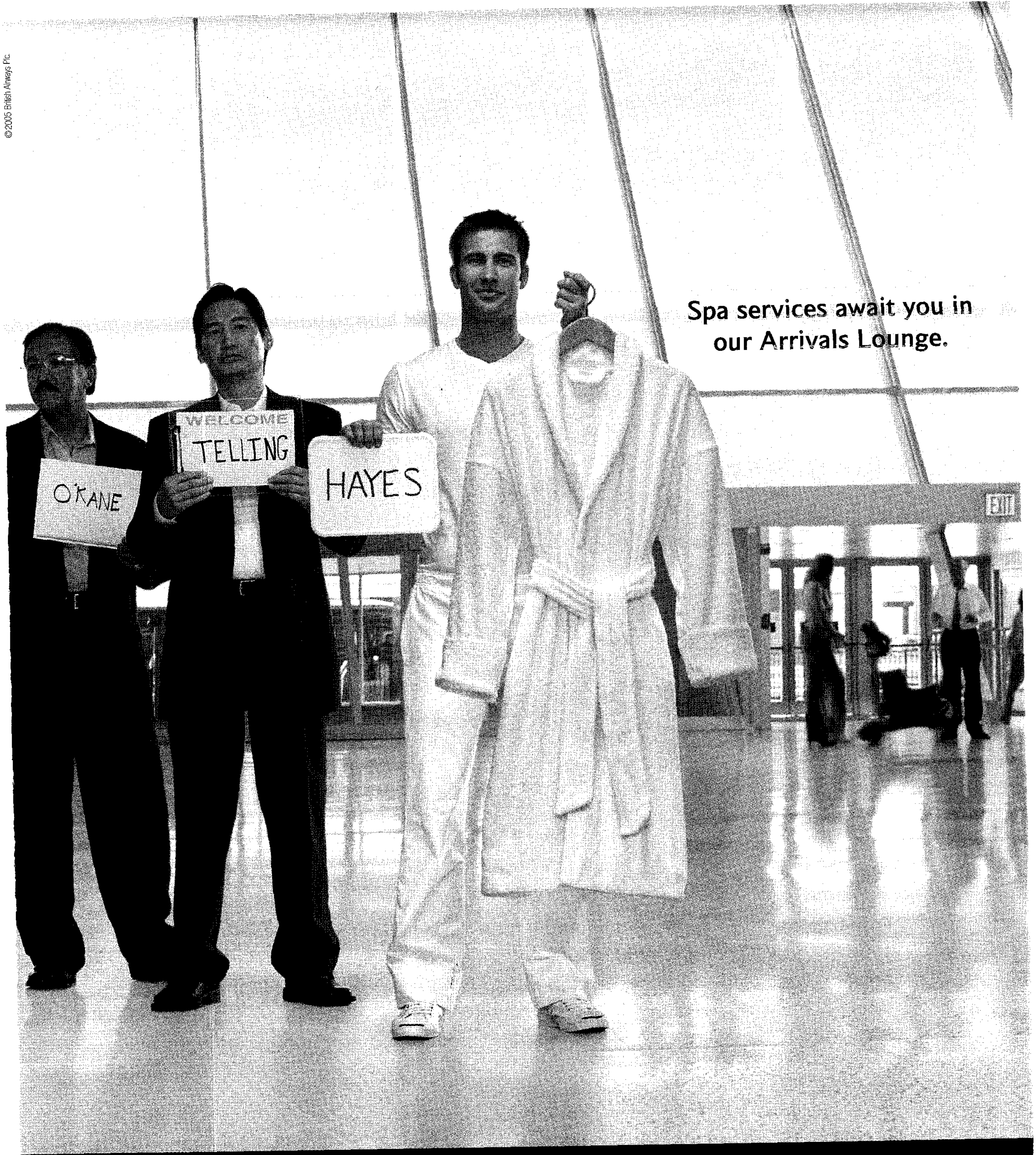
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

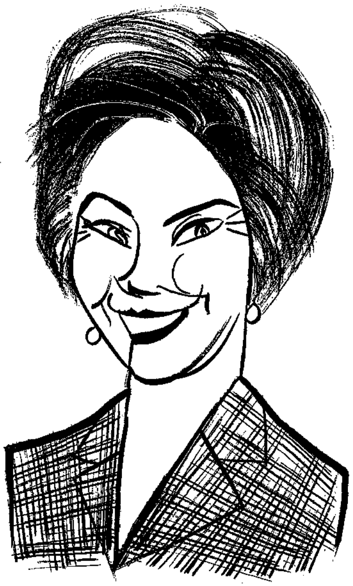
COMMENT

LADIES FIRST

The legal concept of the *femme couverte*, whereby a woman, upon marrying, was absorbed into the person of her husband, was described by the eighteenth-century British scholar Sir William Blackstone in terms that reached for the metaphysical. "The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs everything," Blackstone wrote, in his "Commentaries on the Laws of England." The notion that a woman who marries is, as if by some peculiar biochemical process, transformed into something like an extra organ of her husband, as functional and compliant as a healthy kidney, has ceased to exercise much persuasive power among the general public. Few contemporary wives are expected to conform without dissent to the beliefs, interests, and preoccupations of their husbands, and standup comedy would be the poorer if they did. But there is one class of wife among which evidence of independent thinking is usually a cause for public comment: the small but influential population of First Ladies.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

It is generally assumed of a Presidential wife that she has signed on to the full slate of issues upon which her spouse earned his office, and any public hint of a divergence from the manifesto is treated as a titillating instance of politico-marital discord—or as a clue to what the President really believes and would support, were he not beholden to interest groups. Nancy Reagan was the covered wife par excellence; although she is now known to have urged her husband to make nice with Gorbachev, the main public point of distinction between her interests and Ronnie's was an intimacy with Jerry Zipkin. Barbara Bush's pro-choice inclinations, consistent with the relentless practicality displayed by her heel height and sensible hairdo, was taken to be a much more significant indicator of her husband's true position on abortion than anything he might have said to pro-life voters. Hillary Clinton, a First Lady of a different order, was nonetheless understood to be in political lockstep with her husband: Cardinal Ratzinger to Bill Clinton's Pope John Paul II, the ideological collaborator always two steps behind the irresistible public figure.



Laura Bush

Laura Bush has been remarkably successful in maintaining the impression that there are no notable differences of political opinion between her and her husband, largely because she has let it be thought that when she is with her husband political opinions, much less political arguments, are not something upon which she wants to spend a lot of time. "I've always done what really traditional women do, and I've been very, very satisfied," she once said. Whether or not one is to believe her assertion that her discussions with the President range from the latest news of their daughters' progress to the latest news of their pets' progress, the First Lady has done a good job of convincing observers that words like "North Korea" and "al-Zarqawi"—to say nothing of "health," "Social Security," and "the environment"—are not bandied about the White House residence.

But the quiet blandness of Mrs. Bush has always excited the curiosity of her husband's detractors, largely because of its implausibility. That she voted for Eugene McCarthy in 1968—while her future husband was dodging more strenuous military service by joining the National Guard—seems to bespeak a now submerged radicalism. Her cigarette habit, which she has since relinquished, seemed to signal either rebellion or bohemianism, both welcome traits. And her bookishness has been taken by her husband's liberal opponents as evidence of a much more complicated soul than she admits to. Her statement that the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter of "The Brothers Karamazov" is her favorite extended passage in literature is, to some observers, the most appealing thing about her, although the fact that she has described the chapter as "reassuring" to her Christian beliefs—rather like admiring "Gaslight" for the gags—suggests an unexpected perversity.

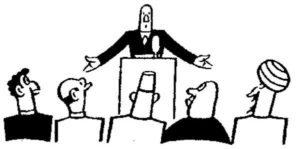
Lately, though, Mrs. Bush has been called upon to step more aggressively into the role of Presidential proxy. At the White House Correspondents' Dinner, she cracked wise, if scripted, about the President's predilection for early nights, about trips to Chippendales with Lynne Cheney and Condi Rice, and about milking horses—the kind of humor that the likes of Jenna Bush might find hilarious, if that stuff weren't so icky coming from one's mom. And then last week, en route to a good-will drop-in tour of a handful of Middle Eastern nations, Mrs. Bush appeared to take issue with the official White House line on current events, noting that it might not have been out of order to let the leader of the free world know that an unauthorized plane was circling the Capitol, even if he was taking a bike ride at the time.

Her willingness to express a dissonant opinion, however, does not amount to a shedding of wifely coverings; indeed, the reception she received in Jerusalem—where she was heckled by irate Jews and angry Palestinians—suggests that Blackstone's dictum about wives being incorporated and consolidated into the person of their husbands holds firm in her case. Having hoarded the capital of her personal popularity for years by declining to enter the political fray, she is now able to spend it to salvage her husband's approval rating, which is currently at forty-seven per cent. The newly opinionated Laura Bush is no more her own woman than she was while smilingly mute.

Rather, she has been transformed from a *femme couverte* into a member of a category that Blackstone did not identify: what might be referred to as a *femme couvrante*—a wife who covers for her embattled husband, concealing his weaknesses with her own quiet force. Her measured outspokenness, while seeming to be at odds with the White House line, is less an expression of marital difference than it is a dutiful form of marital compensation. In conversation with reporters during her Middle East trip, Mrs. Bush said of the recent anti-American rioting and demonstrating in Muslim nations, "You can't blame it all on *Newsweek*," a comment rightly deemed newsworthy, given that the President's official mouthpieces were doing just that. But she stopped short of saying the further truth: that you might blame at least some of it on her husband, the man under whose wing, protection, and cover the entire country currently quails.

—*Rebecca Mead*

THE CLOTH
INTERFAITH AT WORK



A priest, a rabbi, and a judge walked into a bar. Well, not a bar, actually—it was too early in the morning, for one thing, and the Red Hook Community Justice Center doesn't serve booze. Also, there were three priests (two Episcopalians and a practitioner of voodoo) and quite a few judges, including Stephen Breyer, of the United States Supreme Court. Additionally, there was an imam, a Buddhist monk, a couple of Baptist ministers, and representatives of the Sikh, Hindu, and Native American (Snipe Clan, Onondaga Nation) communities. Who would deliver the punch line? Tough to say. Justice Breyer, introducing himself, did elicit a small laugh by dryly stating the obvious—"This is a mixed religious group"—and adding, "We have a mixed religious group in my family: I'm Jewish, Chloe is Episcopal, and Joanna is Anglican." (Joanna is Breyer's wife, and Chloe, his daughter, was one of the Episcopal priests in the room.)

This convergence, which took place the other day, was prompted by a "Roundtable for Religious Leaders," jointly sponsored by the New York State Unified Court System and the Interfaith Center of New York, an organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding among the world's diverse spiritual constituencies—or, at least, judging from all the robes, frocks, hats, collars, beads, and scarves, to exhibiting a vivid array of vestments. Even without any Wiccans, Mormons, or Scientologists on hand, the turnout was impressive. Walter Beebe, an Interfaith Center board member, declared the event "the culmination of what we've been trying to do for years."

For some, just getting to Red Hook had been a triumph. Reverend Darius Pridgen, of the True Bethel Baptist Church, in Buffalo, had flown in to J.F.K. and then suffered through a meandering two-hour cab ride that still had him fuming. One of the judges sympathized—she'd got a little lost, too—and wondered if Reverend Pridgen had used Mapquest. "It's terrible," she said. The reverend might have been better off hitching a ride with Dr. Muhsin Alidina, of the Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Center. "We're on the Van Wyck Expressway, as you come from J.F.K.," Alidina said. "You can't miss our dome."

Rabbi Emanuel Weiser, a Hasid who had come from Williamsburg, said, "I use G.P.S. No wrong turns. It tells you, 'Turn right, turn left.' I picked up Erol and we had no problems." He was referring to Erol Josue, the Haitian voodoo priest, or *hurgan*, who lives, preaches, and plays music (his influences include Boney M, Michael Jackson, and Chicago) in a Bedford-Stuyvesant brownstone. Weiser's wasn't the only carpool, either. Timur Yuskaev, a Muslim program coördinator at the Interfaith Center, picked up Re Fa Shi, the Buddhist, in Sunset Park. ("A rabbi giving a ride to a voodoo priest, and a Muslim giving a

A priest, a judge, and a monk

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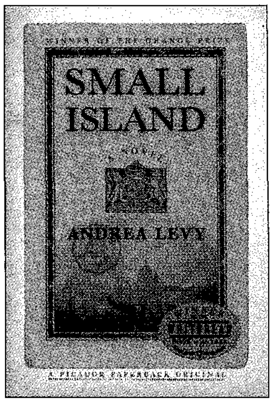
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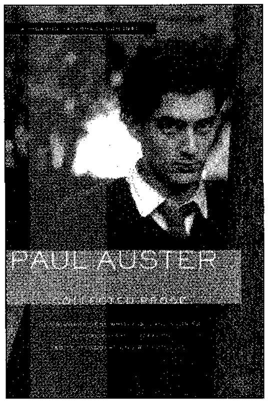
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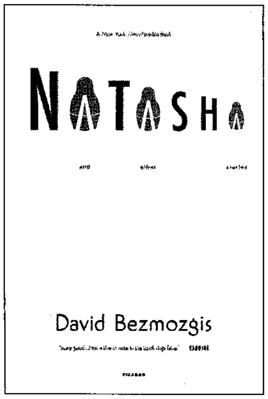
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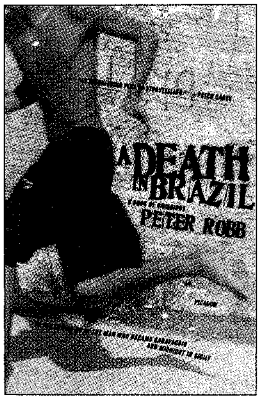
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PICADOR PAPERBACKS...WHAT TO READ NEXT®

ride to a Buddhist—that's interfaith at work," one organizer said.)

The program was divided into two components, "Religious Leaders and the Courts" and "Mediation and Community Dispute Resolution," each of which served as a reminder that panel discussions are almost always a little tedious, no matter how interesting the participants. The idea, basically, was to educate both judges and clergy about how to help one another solve housing and immigration problems—"community justice." Judge Juanita Bing Newton, the moderator of the first session, set the tone, instructing Reverend Pridgen near the start: "Remember, you take your anger out on the cabbies, not on the court system."

Justice Breyer, for his part, mentioned that he'd been reading some Tocqueville lately, and that, even in the mid-nineteenth century, amid all the racism, sexism, and violence toward Native Americans, courthouses and churches had provided a common refuge.

Josue addressed the panel on behalf of his congregants—"There's a lot of stereotypes about voodoo in America"—many of whom, he said, are terrified of courts and cops, equating them with the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. "Myself, I'm very scared of uniforms," he said. (He was wearing a leather jacket and pin-striped pants.)

"You know this thing works, because he just made me comfortable with voodoo," a judge from Queens remarked.

Session two began with Adam Mansky and Dan Weitz, the co-presenters, playing the role of schoolteachers. "Let's go back to when we were children and we did word-association games," Weitz said. "And I ask you to think of the word 'conflict.' What's the first thing that comes to mind?"

The clerics began shouting out, "Disagreement!" "Fight!" "Anger!" "War!" "I don't get what I want!"

Weitz went on to define 'mediation'—"very similar to 'negotiation' . . . but different from 'adjudication' or 'arbitration' "—and then to explain its limitations. ("Imagine if Brown v. Board of Education had been not litigated but, rather, mediated. Where would our society be?")

The proceedings dragged on: Q. & A.s, followed by a tour of the center. Justice Breyer was the first to leave—he was due to speak at the New School's commencement. Re Fa Shi, the Buddhist, began eying his cell phone, and eventually shuffled away with his Muslim friend. Josue lingered, talking with a new acquaintance about voodoo and rock and roll, and declined Rabbi Weiser's offer of a ride home.

—*Ben McGrath*

ODD JOBS DEPT.
COOKIE MASTER

As a vice-president at Wonton Food, Inc., in Long Island City, Donald Lau manages the company's accounts payable and receivable, negotiates with insurers, and, somewhat incidentally, composes the fortunes that go inside the fortune cookies, of which Wonton is the world's largest manufacturer. Each day, Wonton's factory churns out four million Golden Bowl-brand cookies, which are sold to several hundred venders, who, in turn, sell them to most of the forty thousand Chinese restaurants across the country. Wonton's primacy in the industry and, for that matter, in the gambler's imagination is such that when, in March, five of six lucky numbers printed on a fortune happened to coincide with the winning picks for the Powerball lottery, a hundred and ten people, instead of the usual handful, came forward to claim prizes of around a hundred thousand dollars. Lottery officials suspected a scam until they traced the sequence to a fortune printed with the digits "22-28-32-33-39-40" and Donald Lau's prediction: "All the preparation you've done will finally be paying off."

"We've had winners before, but never this many," Lau said the other day, in his East Williamsburg office, which is furnished with stacks of financial reports and "A Dictionary of American Proverbs." "A computer picks the numbers, not me. If only a computer could also write the fortunes." Lau never expected to become a fortune-cookie writer. After graduating from Columbia with degrees in engineering and business, he joined Bank of America, then ran a company that exported logs from the Pacific Northwest to China. In the early eighties, he was hired by a Chinatown noodle manufacturer, which eventually expanded into fortune cookies. The firm bought the Long Island City plant, and it soon became apparent that its antiquated catalogue of fortunes would have to be updated. ("Find someone as gay as you are," one leftover from the nineteen-forties read.) "We knew we needed to add new sayings," Lau said. "I was chosen because my English was the best of the group, not because I'm a poet."

At first, the writing came easily. Finding inspiration in sources ranging from the I Ching to the *Post*, Lau cranked out three or four maxims a day, between scrutinizing spreadsheets and monitoring the company's inventory of chow mein. "I'd be on the subway and look up at the signs and think, Hey, that would make a great fortune," he said. (One such adage: "Beware of odors from unfamiliar sources.") "I'd keep a small notebook and jot down whatever came to me. I don't think I ever sat in front of the computer and said, 'I am going to write ten fortunes right now.' It has to come naturally."

Love, riches, power: there is a limited range of experience that can be expressed in one sentence, and, about eleven years into his tenure, Lau began to run out of ideas. He leaned increasingly on traditional Chinese sayings, which offer insight (along the lines of "True gold fears no fire") but not foresight ("Your income will increase"), and in 1995 he gave up altogether. "I've written thousands of fortunes, but the inspiration is gone," Lau said. "Have you heard of writer's block? That is what happened to me."

These days, he cycles selections from his vast œuvre in and out of circulation. He is worried that readers will notice that the cookies are in reruns, which might result in Wonton's losing its edge on the competition. (This is unlikely. Although there are about forty fortune-cookie companies in the United States, few have Wonton's manufacturing capabilities.) So Lau has decided to bring in new blood. The company will soon advertise for a new fortune writer, and Lau will make the transition to editor. "Maybe when I retire I'll write again—perhaps a book about writing fortunes," he said. Returning to form, he summarized the thrust of the book with two simple axioms. "Don't have too complicated a mind," he said. "Think in ten-word sentences."

—*Jeremy Olshan*

ROAD TEST
STINKY TOWN

Summer, when the city becomes a giant convection oven, is smell season, so its opening day, coming as it did earlier this spring, before the recent cold snap, was something of a surprise. The mercury shot up above eighty, and all across the city long-dormant stenches began to stir, reminding New Yorkers that it will soon be time to employ their preferred odor-avoidance techniques: nose-holding, mouth-breathing, the strategic sniffing of a packet of mints.

Last year, Patus, an Israeli company, began marketing a clear gel called Odorscreen. Ilan Shatz, one of Patus's founders, had been in New York on business shortly after 9/11, and heard that recovery workers were complaining about the terrible smell at Ground Zero. Some workers had taken to spreading Vicks VapoRub under their noses. Odorscreen is applied in a similar fashion, but, rather than mask odors, as air fresheners and perfumes do, it temporarily alters the smell receptors in the nose, so the user perceives only the soothing scent of vanilla. (Or, in Asian markets, green tea: Patus is considering culture-specific Odorscreen formulas.) One of Patus's first clients was Zaka, the Israeli group that recovers bodies and body parts at the sites of accidents and bombings. This winter, after the tsunami in Asia, Patus distributed Odorscreen packets to relief workers there. These are far graver situations, surely, than the olfactory hazards of summer in the city, but Patus envisions consumer applications for Odorscreen, too, and New York is high on the company's list of stinky target markets.

Will it make it here? On that first smelly day, an independent expert was called in. Rich Anderson, a city sanitation worker from Bay Ridge, who spends his days picking up the garbage of Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea, agreed to give Odorscreen a whirl during his off hours.

The first stop was the Fulton Fish Market. "It should be pretty nasty right now," he said as he sat in his car, applying the gel. A pine-tree-shaped air freshener dangled from the rearview mirror. Anderson, who has a sturdy-looking nose, reviewed his olfactory biography. Earliest smell-memory: the bakeries of Bay Ridge on Sunday mornings. Pet peeve: freshly applied asphalt. ("Man, that stuff stinks!")

He stepped outside. The market was closed for the day, but a fishiness lingered. "They clean this place up and they hose it down, but you can never get that smell out," Anderson said. He approached some pallets. "All the fish guts soak into the wood," he explained. He bent over a pallet and began to sniff. A security guard came over. "Sanitation. I'm doing a survey," Anderson said with authority, and the guard retreated. Anderson bent down again—a few more long sniffs—then said, "This stuff works pretty good."

Later, after driving through crowded Chinatown streets with his window down ("Smell it! Smell the air!"), Anderson parked near the Manhattan Bridge and made his way on foot to the vaulted areas beneath the overpass. "This is where at night everyone—if you're going to put it in the paper—*urinates*," he said. "Homeless people, people getting out of the bars nearby, people in cars getting onto the main entrance to the bridge . . . Smell it?" Yes.

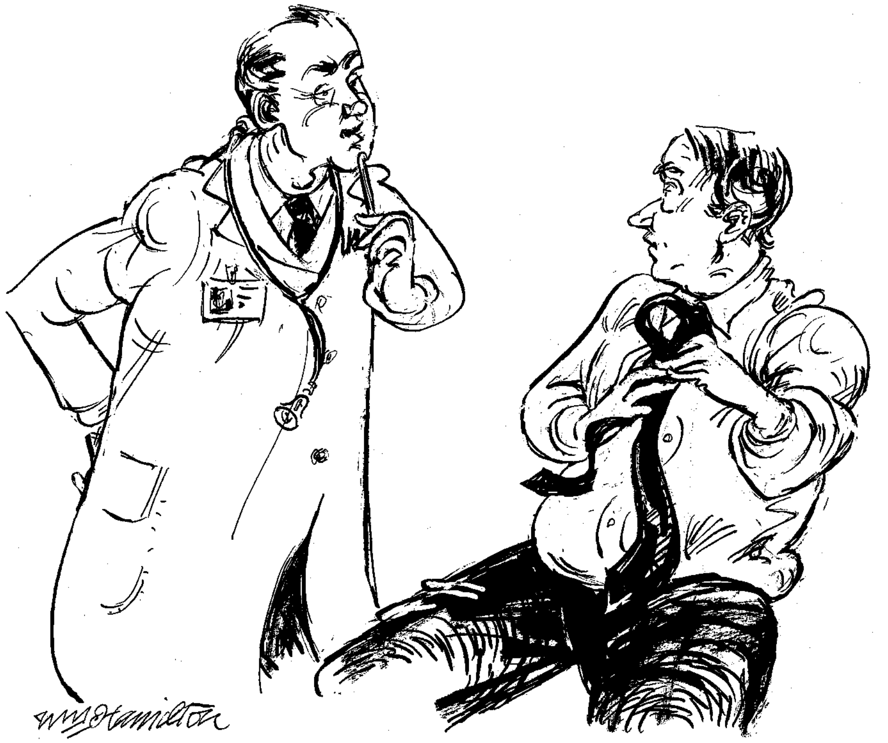
"A fishy smell, the smell of Chinese food, garbage, street, stagnant water, urine," he went on. "Everything mixes together. But it's hard to detect now with this stuff on." He stopped to sniff at a dirty section of drainage pipe under the bridge. An elderly Chinese couple, seated behind a card table, eyed him with suspicion. "I can't smell anything but vanilla," he said.

Anderson arrived at the Gansevoort meat market just as a private sanitation truck pulled up. Two workers jumped out and began moving red buckets onto a loader. Ernest Moore, the driver, a wiry, intense man, wearing yellow rubber gloves and a gold hoop earring, got out.

"We're looking for rotting flesh," Anderson informed him.

Moore grinned fatly. "I got some smelly meat," he said, gesturing to the truck behind him. "Some days, you look inside those barrels and there's nothing but white, creeping and crawling." He shook his shoulders, in imitation of writhing maggots. He took an Odorscreen sample for later use, but he appeared skeptical. "The city doesn't bother me," he said. "Same smells, different day, you know what I mean?"

—*Field Maloney*



"Congressman, you need a junket."

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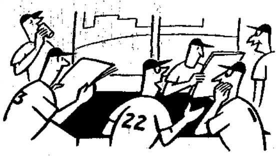
THE HOME TEAM

THY PITCHER'S WIFE



Anna Benson, the spectacularly attractive wife of the Mets' pitcher Kris Benson, has become a familiar presence in the sports pages lately.

"Just because I went on the Howard Stern show last year and said that if my husband was unfaithful to me I'd sleep with everybody on the team, including the ball boys!" she said the other day, before leaving her Palace hotel suite for Shea, where Kris Benson was scheduled to pitch in the season's first Yankees-Mets series. (The couple have a house in Atlanta, Georgia.) "I was talking about infidelity. I have to come up with stupid humor to be understood by these idiots who take everything so literally. All these big-time athletes who cheat and get away with it! Why should we put up with that shit? It's time for us to get back to traditional values!" She scooped up a tiny, pinkish French bulldog wearing a black Mets sweater.

"This is Petunia, only twelve weeks old," she said. "I saw her last week in a pet shop. I couldn't resist. I have four other French bulldogs at home in Georgia. Kris loves Petunia. He wants Petunia to come with me to the game, along with the kids here—Paul James, we call him P.J., he's eight and a half, and Haylee Love, she's four and a half. Kris and I'll have another one or two or three. I'll just whip them out."

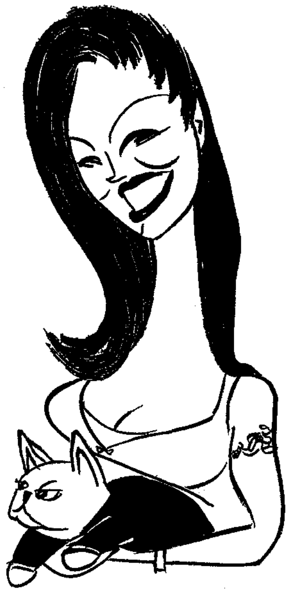
Both kids were blond, beautiful, and polite. P.J. wore a Mets jersey. Haylee Love carried a Madame Alexander doll with long dark tresses.

"My Mommy doll," Haylee Love said.

"One of those very expensive ones," her mother said. "She can do anything to it she likes—get it dirty or anything. She calls it the Mommy doll because it has hair like mine. It's long, Cherokee, down to my tail. Kris loves to brush my hair." She went on, "He's six-four. I'm five-five, but I wear these four-inch heels, because I want to look good around the team. These shitty heels kill me. After we go inside, I'll put on my Chanel slippers. I have an injured big toe, damaged further by surgery. I have toe trouble from my strip-dancing days. But I don't want any more bungled surgery. I don't want them to touch me. I did only one cosmetic-surgery thing: I had breast implants. After having three kids, I felt I deserved it. Kris doesn't want me to have plastic surgery on my face. He says, 'Don't let them do any of that crap to you; you're too pretty.' Kris has the eye of an eagle."

The kids were hustled by a nanny into one car. Their mother rode to Shea with another driver. She said, "P.J. has 'James' as his middle name, just as Kris is named 'Kristin James.' Kris's family are baseball fans, so their names are all 'K's—Kraig, Kassie, and Karley."

In the car, Mrs. Benson hugged Petunia and said, "My parents were so mean to me, they wouldn't let me have a dog or any pets. I was a lonely latchkey kid." She dropped out of school after the tenth grade and left home when she was sixteen. "I was a dancer in the Atlanta strip clubs, the Mardi Gras and the Cheetah," she said. "I had a baby and then a husband when I was seventeen. Kris was playing on a triple-A club then, the Nashville Sounds. We met in 1998, when I was dancing at the Mardi Gras. He said to me, 'You don't belong here.' We had that immediate physical attraction for each other. But I wouldn't sleep with him. I wouldn't introduce him to my family or to my child. I made him work hard. I made him suffer. You have to make them suffer." Eventually, they got married, on their own, in Maui. "Kris is the absolute epitome. He doesn't drink much, doesn't smoke, doesn't kick or scream or cuss. And he married a harlot. It's an interesting dynamic. The yin and the yang, for sure."



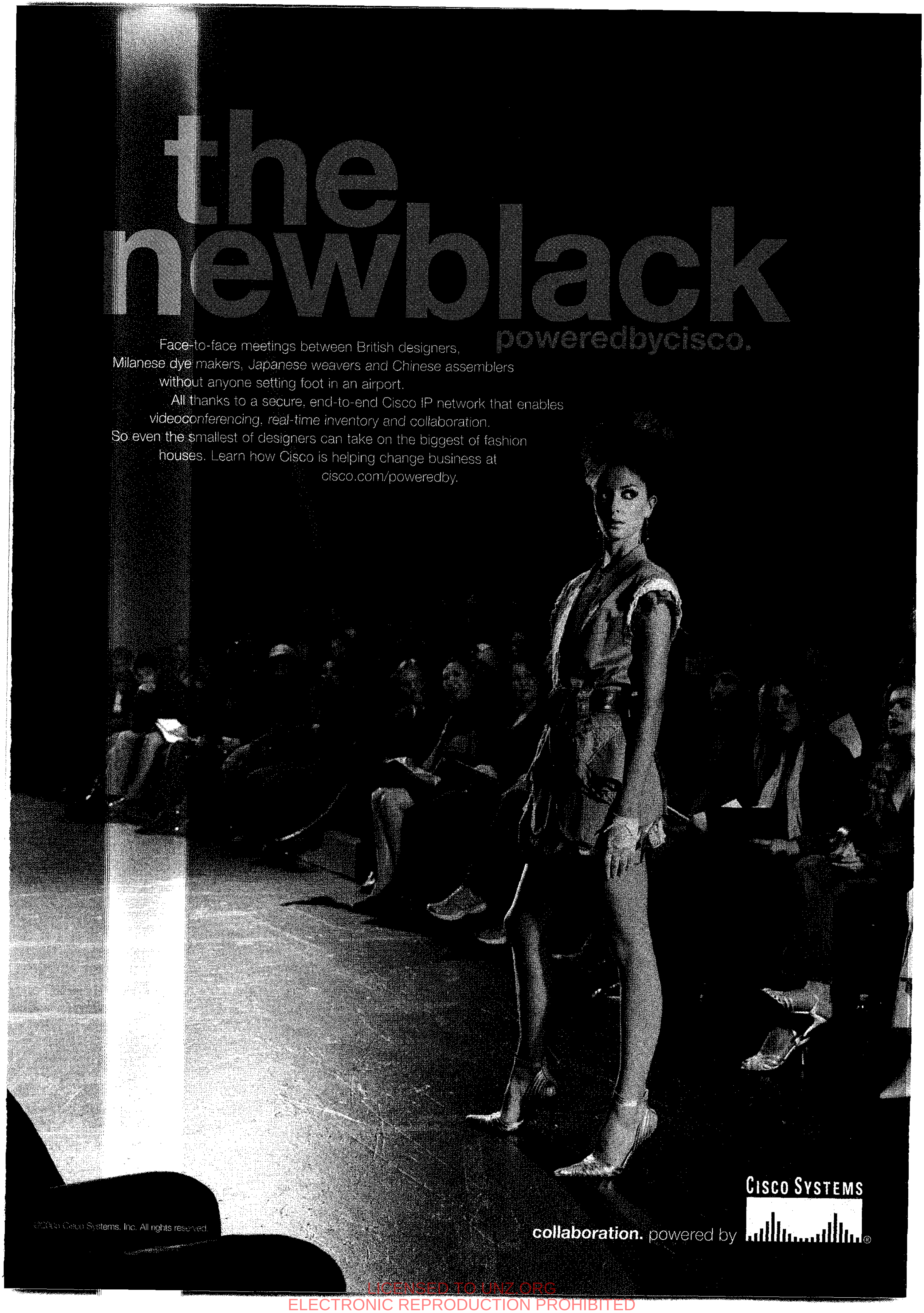
Anna Benson

At Shea, the players were not yet on the field. Mrs. Benson was shown to a glassed-in luxury box. She took off the high heels and put on the Chanel slippers and then installed herself, stretching out her legs and crossing them on a window seat. "I want Kris to look up and see me here," she said. "He always thinks of me. After every inning he pitches, he looks up and does this." She put her forefinger in her right ear. "Our signal," she said. "The thing about Kris is, he has never tried to make me conform; he lets me be who I am. In Georgia, they're so judgmental. It's real Bible Belt. I was terrible until I got with Kris. He put the glow on me. He's the most real person I know. Kris can do self-hypnosis, he's so in tune with his body. When I came to him, I had nothing—two pairs of panties and one bra. Suddenly, I found I was married to a millionaire. It was always in the back of my mind: I'd better not get too comfortable with good things. But Kris took me by the shoulders and put his face close to mine." She illustrated. "He said, 'You can choose to live your life happy or you can choose to live your life miserable. I choose to live my life happy, so what are you going to do?'" She held up her left hand to show a diamond-encrusted Rolex. "It's got diamonds, but as a watch it's crap, doesn't keep time," she said.

The game started. Benson began striking out Yankees. His wife did a lot of yelling at the players. "I don't sit with the other wives, down there, because I will talk shit," she said. "Before we were with the Mets, when players tried to boss me around I told them, 'You're not my daddy!' I don't give a shit. I don't care that much about baseball. I want to do many other things. I'm a humanitarian and a philanthropist. When I'm in New York, I go out by myself and talk to the homeless on the street. I listen to them. I want to hear their stories. I want to talk about today's issues."

After every inning Benson pitched, he looked up at the box and put his forefinger in his right ear. He pitched six innings. He retired twelve of the first thirteen batters. And the Mets won, 7–1. Mrs. Benson said to Haylee Love, "Your daddy beat them."

—*Lillian Ross*



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ANNALS OF EDUCATION

BEST IN CLASS

Students are suing their way to the top.

BY MARGARET TALBOT

Daniel Kennedy remembers when he still thought that valedictorians were a good thing. Kennedy, a wiry fifty-nine-year-old who has a stern buzz cut, was in 1997 the principal of Sarasota High School, in Sarasota, Florida. Toward the end of the school year, it became apparent that several seniors were deadlocked in the race to become valedictorian. At first, Kennedy saw no particular reason to worry. "My innocent thought was What possible problem could those great kids cause?" he recalled last month, during a drive around Sarasota. "And I went blindly on with my day."

The school had a system in place to break ties. "If the G.P.A.s were the same, the award was supposed to go to the kid with the most credits," Kennedy explained. It turned out that one of the top students, Denny Davies, had learned of this rule, and had quietly arranged to take extra courses during his senior year, including an independent study in algebra. "The independent study was probably a breeze, and he ended up with the most credits," Kennedy said.

Davies was named valedictorian. His chief rivals for the honor were furious—in particular, a girl named Kylie Barker, who told me recently that she had wanted to be valedictorian "pretty much forever."

Kennedy recalled, "Soon, the kids were doing everything they could to battle it out." As we drove past sugary-white beaches, high-rise hotels, and prosperous strip malls, he told me that the ensuing controversy "effectively divided the school and the community." Kennedy took the position that Davies had followed the school's own policy, which he had been resourceful enough to figure out, and whether he should have been allowed to load on an easy extra class was beside the point. He'd done it, and he hadn't broken any rules. Davies's guidance counsellor, Paul Storm, agreed. In an interview with the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune* at the time, he said of Davies, "He's very clever. He said, 'I want to be valedictorian. I've figured out I need to do this and that. Can you help me?' Denny had a good strategy, and this strategy was available to anyone who was a competitor."

Barker's supporters argued that what Davies had done was a sneaky way of gaming the system. "It never crossed my mind to approach it as a *strategy*," Barker, who is now pursuing a Ph.D. in chemistry at Northwestern University, said. "I just thought it was something you worked really hard for." Kimberly Belcher, who was ranked third that year, and who is now studying for a doctorate in theology at Notre Dame University, told me, "Among our friends, who were sort of the Academic Olympics and National Honor Society types, it was a big deal. Most of the people I knew thought that it was unfair of Denny to use what we thought of as a loophole to take a class that was too easy for him, and to do it secretly. We felt betrayed. I'm not angry anymore, but, boy, I was angry then." Davies, who is now a captain in the Air Force, and is stationed in Germany, said that he didn't care to comment about the dispute, except to say that he was a "firm believer in the idea that people benefit from healthy competition."

During the final weeks of the school year, Kennedy was meeting with both sets of riled parents, and students were buttonholing him in the hallway. "I'm telling you, it was hostile!" he said. Some teachers considered boycotting graduation; students talked about booing Davies when he walked out onstage. Kylie Barker's mom, Cheryl, said that she recalls getting a call in the middle of the day from Kylie's chemistry teacher, Jim Harshman, who asked her to pick up Kylie from school, saying, "She's in a pressure cooker here, and she's about to burst."

ERIC PALMA

Kennedy tried to broker a compromise. Davies had suggested that he and Barker be named co-valedictorians, and Kennedy embraced the idea. But the Barkers weren't excited about it. "The principal was trying to make everybody happy, and when you do that there's always somebody who isn't," Cheryl Barker said. "I guess it was me."

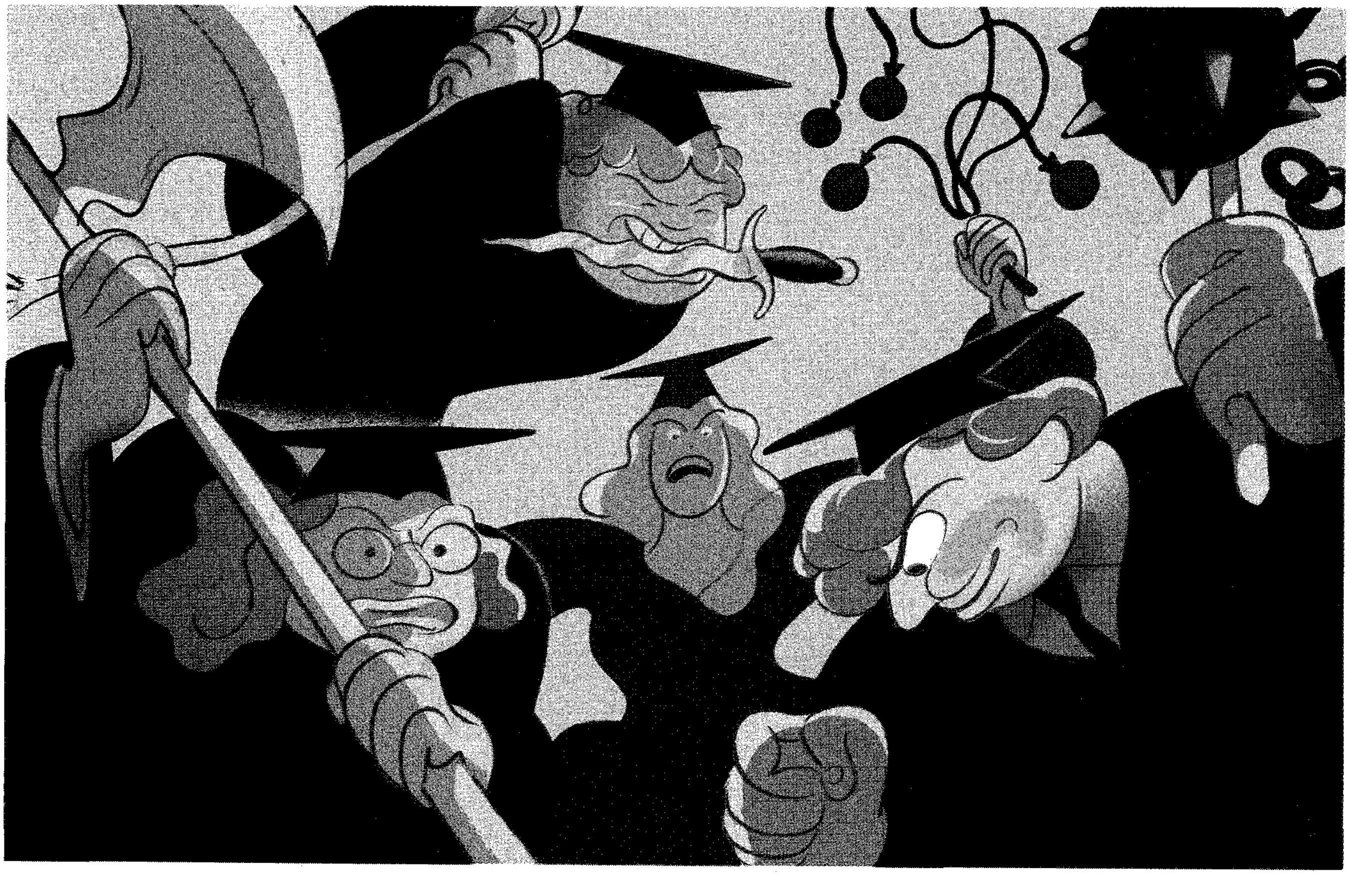
Kennedy remembers finally "convincing everybody to agree reluctantly—and I do mean *extremely* reluctantly—to have co-valedictorians." He went on, "I have been in education basically my whole life, and I've been to a lot of graduations in my time. But I dreaded this one. Sarasota High is a big school—three thousand kids—and there were probably seven thousand people in the audience. At that time, it felt like half of the students in the room hated one of those two valedictorians and half hated the other. The tension was so thick that I was sitting up there in my cap and gown sweating buckets the whole time." In the end, both students got through their speeches—Kylie's was about integrity—without incident. But Kennedy, a likable traditionalist who has been married to his childhood sweetheart for thirty-seven years, concluded that it was time to get rid of valedictorians at Sarasota High.

Kennedy convened a committee to consider various alternatives, and it was decided that from then on all students in the top ten per cent of the class—which at Sarasota means about seventy-five people—would march in first during graduation and have an asterisk printed next to their names on the program. "Students and parents got to see more kids recognized," Kennedy said. "It made everybody feel better."

Sarasota is a competitive school district—while visiting the area, I saw a car with a bumper sticker that read, "My Child Was Student of the Month at Tuttle Elementary"—but most of the local high schools have followed Kennedy's lead. Riverview High School has also eliminated valedictorians and salutatorians; Booker High School ended the tradition last year. Four years ago, North Port High opened near Sarasota. George Kenney, its principal, recalled thinking that it "would be easier to just start out without valedictorians, so we wouldn't be taking something away later on." He added, "There's an awful lot of clawing and scratching to get to the top. You have families at some schools coming in freshman year saying, 'How can my kid get to No. 1?' And the pressure that puts on teachers is inexcusable. 'Valedictorian' is an antiquated title, and I think it has more negative connotations and effects than positive ones."

When Kennedy left Sarasota High to form a charter school, the Sarasota Military Academy, in 2001, he did not even consider having a valedictorian. Kennedy has an amiable way about him, but he's not kidding when he says, "My advice to other principals is, Whatever you do, do *not* name a valedictorian. Any principal who does is facing peril."

At one time, it was obvious who the best students in a school were. But now the contenders for the valedictorian title, especially at large, top-performing suburban high schools, are numerous and determined. Many schools offer Advanced Placement courses—and sometimes honors and International Baccalaureate classes—extra weight when a student's G.P.A. is calculated, so that an A earns 5.0 points, versus 4.0



The contenders for the valedictorian title, especially at large, top-performing suburban high schools, are numerous and determined.

in a regular class. Students who fill their schedules with A.P. classes, as the ambitious ones tend to do, can end up with G.P.A.s well above 4.0.

Jim Conrey is the director of public information at Adlai Stevenson High School, in Lincolnshire, Illinois—a public school with forty-five hundred students that is well funded enough to have such a thing as a director of public information. Students at the top of their class, Conrey said, are often separated by one thousandth of a decimal point. A few years ago, a school committee issued a report saying that "parents routinely phone the principal's office to express their concern over the competitive nature of our numerical ranking practice. Minuscule differences between the ranks of two students can often be perceived as major differences. Is a student ranked No. 1 in a given class really the 'best' student in that class?" As of this year, Stevenson High will no longer have a valedictorian and a salutatorian. Instead, students can apply to speak at graduation, and a faculty panel will select two winners. "If you go to a really good school, you could be ranked a hundred and thirty-fourth in your class and still be a really good student," Conrey said.

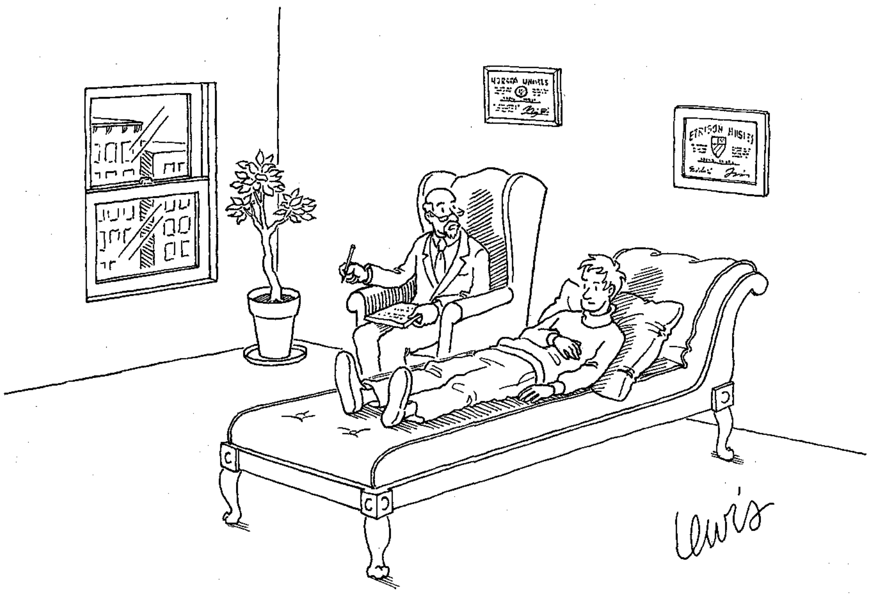
Between 1990 and 2000, the over-all mean G.P.A. of high-school students increased from 2.68 to 2.94, which is attributable in part to grade inflation and in part to the fact that students are working harder. Last year, more than a million students took at least one A.P. course. During the nineteen-nineties, the percentage of students taking A.P. or International Baccalaureate classes in math more than doubled, from 4.4 per cent of graduating seniors to 9.5 per cent. My own high school, North Hollywood High, in Los Angeles, had three or four A.P. classes when I graduated, in 1979 (a time when we were told that our most illustrious alumnus was Bert Convy, the game-show host; Susan Sontag had gone there, too, but nobody mentioned her). Now it has twenty-two.

Some schools, responding to the critique that competition has got too bruising, have decided that naming a single valedictorian is part of the reason that today's students have become so anxious. (Many small private schools came to this conclusion long ago, and never adopted the valedictorian tradition.) An organization called Stressed Out Students, which is headed by Denise Clark Pope, a Stanford education professor, has a list of about twenty-five schools, mostly in the Bay Area and Silicon Valley, that have pledged to try to make students and their parents less driven. Pope told me that "it would be healthier to eliminate valedictorians or change the rules, so that, for example, anyone who wants to can put their hat in the ring, and then there can be a vote for the best graduation speaker. Then you get a person who really wants to give a speech. It's not an academic contest."

A number of schools now call everyone who gets a 4.0 or higher a valedictorian. At Cleveland High School, in the San Fernando Valley, there will be thirty-two valedictorians this year. At Mission San Jose, in Northern California, there will be twenty-three. "We have such an outstanding student body that it was just hard to get that definitive," Stuart Kew, the principal of Mission San Jose, said. "Occasionally, we get the criticism that it's so watered down it doesn't mean anything. But the students don't feel that way." On graduation day, each of the school's many valedictorians will speak at a ceremony, where, one hopes, the chairs will be comfortable.

The single-valedictorian tradition is also being endangered by lawsuits. In 2003, Brian Delekta, who narrowly missed having the highest G.P.A. in his class, sued his school district, near Port Huron, Michigan, asking that he be credited with an A-plus, instead of an A, for a work-study class that he took at his mother's law firm. (In addition, Delekta asked for a restraining order on the publication of class rankings.) In another case that year, Blair Hornstine, a senior at Moorestown High School, in New Jersey, and the daughter of a New Jersey superior-court judge, sued the local board of education to be named the school's sole valedictorian; she also asked for two hundred thousand dollars in compensatory damages and more than two million dollars in punitive damages. Hornstine had an unspecified illness that caused "substantial fatigue," and, with the consent of the school district, she had taken many of her classes at home, with private tutors. Her transcript showed twenty-three A-pluses, nine A's, and a single A-minus; two-thirds of her classes were A.P. courses. Her weighted G.P.A. was 4.6894, which reportedly put her .055 points ahead of her closest competitor, Kenneth Mirkin.

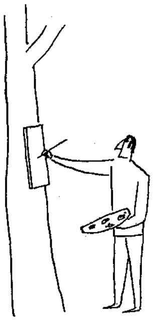
The school board, however, decided that Hornstine's home instruction had given her an unfair advantage and that she should share the valedictorian title with Mirkin. Judge Freda Wolfson sided with Hornstine. The defendants, she wrote, "should revel in the success" of their accommodation to a student's disability "and the academic star it has produced," instead of seeking "to di-



"Tell me about your mother again, this time in a slow, sultry falsetto."

minish the honor that she has rightly earned.” In her ruling, Judge Wolfson nevertheless made a larger point about the insidious effects of naming a top student. “The fierceness of the competition in Moorestown High School is evidenced by the widespread involvement of parents in this dispute, which may have been fueled by the school’s emphasis on grade-based distinctions,” she wrote. “While the school’s Handbook states that it seeks to minimize competition by no longer reporting class rank . . . elsewhere it heightens the levels of competition by naming a valedictorian.” The case inspired a mocking Web site, the Blair Hornstine Project, and a flood of vitriolic Internet commentary; Hornstine was so excoriated by critics in her home town that she did not even attend graduation. The Moorestown Board of Education acknowledged no wrongdoing but eventually agreed to an out-of-court settlement, under which Hornstine was reportedly paid sixty thousand dollars. (Harvard, which had admitted her to the Class of 2007, rescinded the offer not long after a local paper for which Hornstine had written a column revealed that she had plagiarized material.)

I recently spoke to some students who had been involved in legal actions over the naming of a valedictorian, and they seemed to share a common attitude toward the experience. On the one hand, they shrugged off the importance of the honor—they had gone on to colleges where valedictorians were so plentiful that to have claimed bragging rights would have been seriously uncool. On the other hand, they could easily recall their high-school state of mind, and feel indignant all over again, utterly convinced that they had done the right thing. In 2003, Sarah Bird, a senior at Plano West Senior High School, in Plano, Texas, requested a hearing before the local school board. Another student, Jennifer Wu, had been named sole valedictorian, although her G.P.A. was virtually identical to Bird’s. Bird had played on the school’s basketball team. The sport was treated like a physical-education course by the school, and for several semesters she had been given unweighted A’s. This had put her at a disadvantage, Bird felt. The hearing, at which Bird’s lawyer asked that the two students be named co-valedictorians, involved some very close parsing. Brent William Bailey, Bird’s lawyer, told me, “Going in, the other girl had a G.P.A. of 4.46885 and Sarah had 4.46731—so that was a difference of .00154. Then the calculations were redone and Sarah came out with a G.P.A. of 4.47647.” The school board granted Bird’s request. “I was prepared to go ahead with a lawsuit if it hadn’t gone our way,” Bailey recalled. Wu, who expressed unhappiness over the decision to the *Dallas Morning News*, then requested a hearing of her own, to question the way the process was handled. Wu is now a sophomore at Harvard, where she is a pre-med student. We spoke just before finals, and she clearly had other things on her mind. “Nobody in college cares about your having been valedictorian,” she said. “My roommate had no idea I was valedictorian. It doesn’t come up, and I don’t think about it.” Still, when I asked Wu why she had complained to the school board, she said, “I wanted to make sure the school knew how traumatic something like this can be—thinking you’re competing under one set of rules, and having an expectation because of that, and then finding out you’re competing under another.”



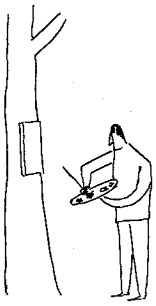
Stephanie Klotz’s academic ambitions made her stand out at Valley View High, in Germantown, Ohio, from which she graduated in 2001. “We weren’t from here originally,” Klotz told me. “My dad had been in the military, and we’d lived in Pennsylvania, Idaho, Texas, and upstate New York. I knew there was a big world out there, and I was going to go out and conquer it. I wasn’t going to get married right out of high school and be a housewife with twenty kids.” Klotz paused, but not for long. “I mean, Germantown is a place with only three stoplights. I come from a very educated family, and expectations are set at a higher level than they are in a small farming town.” Then, too, Klotz said, she was always kind of a “nerd—a science nerd, a nature nerd.” She continued, “My dad went deer hunting when I was three years old, and they were cutting up the deer next door, because my mom wouldn’t let it in the house, and I was, like, ‘Daddy, can I play with the head?’ ” As a young girl, she loved accompanying her father, an anesthetist, to the hospital, where she was allowed to observe surgeries. At Valley View, where football is very popular—T-shirts bear the slogan “Valley View Football Is Life. Nothing Else Matters”—Klotz was often unhappy. She doesn’t like football, and was captain of the dance team, which, she said, “got me made fun of—that and being smart. I’d say, ‘I want to see *you* do a kick line for an hour!’ ” She also worked with the town’s rescue squad (“I was so service-oriented; I did hundreds and hundreds of hours of service work”), loved science, and hated English and history. She was often “bored to tears” in classes that she found insufficiently challenging, but she got straight A’s anyway, as well as tens of thousands of dollars in college-scholarship money.

Several weeks before the school year ended, the principal of Valley View told Klotz that she and four other students would share the valedictorian title. Klotz thought the decision was odd—as she recalled, one of the girls had got a B—but she let it go. “Notices were sent out, relatives notified,” her father, Randy Klotz, said. Three of the students had G.P.A.s above 4.0 because they’d taken at least one A.P. course, whereas Stephanie, whose G.P.A. was 4.0, had not. (Instead of taking A.P. history in her junior year, Stephanie, who hoped to become a doctor, had decided to take another chemistry course.) Three weeks before graduation, Stephanie was told that the school was reversing its decision: she and Megan Keener, another girl with a 4.0 G.P.A., wouldn’t be valedictorians after all. (Keener, too, lacked A.P. credits, though she had been taking classes at local colleges.) Two students with G.P.A.s above 4.0 would be named co-valedictorians, and a third would be salutatorian. “I would be nothing,” Klotz recalled.

When Klotz told her parents, they complained first to the principal, then several times to the school board. Finally, the family hired a lawyer and sued the school district, the superintendent, and the principal of Valley View. A judge in the Common Pleas Court of Montgomery County, Ohio, sided with the Klotzes, and, days before graduation, issued an order reinstating Klotz and Keener as valedictorians.

“At first, I was, like, I’m seventeen, I can’t be dealing with this before I graduate from high school,” Klotz told me. “I’m not strong enough. And then I thought, I need to fight for the people who are coming after me, who really aren’t strong enough to fight.” Graduation day, she recalled, “was kind of a comedy event, really. I was sitting there, bored, twirling my tassels.” Klotz said that she wasn’t allowed to speak, because the decision to reinstate her title was made just before graduation day. One of the valedictorians who did speak, she recalled, “read that Dr. Seuss book ‘Oh, the Places You’ll Go!’ to the audience. I mean, she read practically the entire book.” Klotz remembers being given “so many academic awards and plaques, it was ridiculous. Every time I sat down, I had to get up again to get an award. I had so many plaques I literally couldn’t carry them off the stage, and I’m, like, ‘Oh, yeah, right, I’m not valedictorian?’ ”

Klotz graduated magna cum laude from the University of Dayton in May, and will start medical school at the University of Cincinnati in August. At college, Klotz realized that she was “a little fish in a big sea with a lot of valedictorians.” But she’s glad that she sued: she learned that she could be a fighter when she needed to be, and she showed Germantown that she couldn’t be “walked all over.” Klotz, who is engaged to be married to a social worker, is working as a waitress until school starts. To her fiancé’s chagrin, she’s been watching a lot of “trauma-and-E.R. shows” at home. (He lacks her strong stomach.) “There’s so much focus on all the terrible things youths in our society do—murdering each other, using drugs—that I think it’s good to focus on the positive things, as opposed to people who are dropping out and are failures,” she said. “There are all these special programs to keep kids in school, give them a special experience, make them feel special. So much of classroom experience is focussed on these kids who are *lacking*. There’s nothing to reward the kids who are self-motivated and are working hard.”



The first public high school in the United States, Boston’s English Classical School, was founded in 1821. Within a few decades, the practice of designating a valedictorian had become an established tradition in American high schools. There was little public financing of secondary schools and a good deal of hostility to them, at least until the eighteen-eighties. High schools were so widely criticized as palaces of privilege, teaching Latin to the children of the rich, that Horace Mann, the education reformer, tried for a while to come up with a new name for “high school,” reasoning that perhaps the phrase implied “superior and exclusive,” William J. Reese notes in his 1995 history “The Origins of the American High School.” (In fact, many high-school students in the nineteenth century were middle-class girls training to support themselves as teachers.) By 1900, roughly ten per cent of American adolescents were enrolled in high school, and public funding remained relatively small.

The graduation ceremony, and in particular the valedictory, served an important purpose for proponents of publicly funded secondary education. A clever graduate declaiming loftily was something to show off to the local taxpayers, and, besides, graduation ceremonies were popular entertainments in an age that lacked television and radio and honored elocution and oratory. “By the late eighteen-fifties, approximately four thousand spectators attended the graduation exercises at Philadelphia’s Central High School—and twice that number was turned away,” Reese writes. “Eight to ten thousand citizens arrived for the event in Cleveland in the eighteen-seventies.” In smaller towns, five hundred or more people might show up to see five or six graduates.

The valedictorian prize also celebrated people who weren’t often publicly recognized: studious girls. In the nineteenth century, young women largely outperformed young men in American high schools. They generally won more prizes, graduated at higher rates, and displayed lovelier penmanship. At graduation, girls would read while sitting or standing on a low step, since it wasn’t considered proper for them to speak from a platform. Still, the opportunity to appear before an audience of hundreds or thousands, to be singled out for one’s academic achievements, must have been heady at a time when modesty and self-effacement were the constant counsel for young women.

In 1981, two professors, Terry Denny and Karen Arnold, began following the lives of eighty-one high-school valedictorians—forty-six women and thirty-five men from Illinois. (Their sample is, admittedly, narrow.) According to Arnold’s 1995 book “Lives of Promise: What Becomes of High School Valedictorians,” these students continued to distinguish themselves academically in college; a little less than sixty per cent pursued graduate studies. By their early thirties, most were “working in high-level, prestigious, secure professions”—they were lawyers, accountants, professors, doctors, engineers. Arnold totted up fifteen Ph.D.s, six law degrees, three medical degrees, and twenty-two master’s degrees in her group. The valedictorians got divorced at a lower rate than did the population at large, were less likely to use alcohol and drugs, and tended to be active in their communities. At the same time, Arnold, who stays in touch with her cohort, has found that few of the valedictorians seem destined for intellectual eminence or for creative work outside of familiar career paths. Dedicated to the well-rounded ideal—to be a valedictorian, after all, you must excel in classes that don’t interest you or are poorly taught—the valedictorians had “used their strong work ethic to pursue multiple academic and extracurricular interests. None was obsessed with a single talent area to which he or she subordinated school and social involvement.” This marks a difference, Arnold said, from what we know about many eminent achievers, who tend to evince an early passion for a particular field. For these people, Arnold writes, a "powerful early interest evolves into lifelong, intensive, even obsessive involvement in the talent area." She goes on, "Exceptional adult achievers often recall formal schooling as a disliked distraction." Valedictorians, by contrast, conformed to the expectations of school and carefully chose careers that were likely to be socially and financially secure: "As a rule, valedictorians relegated their early interests to hobbies, second majors, or regretted dead ends. The serious athletes among the valedictorians never pursued sports occupations. Most of the high school musicians hung up their instruments during college."

Becoming a valedictorian at a top high school is a gruelling trajectory—involving perhaps a dozen A.P. classes and hours of study each night. Sometimes students cave in to the pressure. In 2002, Audrey Lin, one of Mission San Jose's many valedictorians, admitted that she had cheated to get to the top in high school, and gave back her valedictorian plaque. Lin, who is now a student at Berkeley, made her confession in conjunction with the release of a study by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, in which three-quarters of the high-school students surveyed acknowledged having cheated on a test the previous year; ten years earlier, the number had been sixty-one per cent.

In some ways, it seems that the valedictorian is a status designed for a simpler time, when fewer people aspired to college. It isn't entirely suited to a brutally competitive age in which the dividing line between those who go to college and those who don't may be the most significant fissure in American society, and in which the children (and parents) of the upper middle classes have been convinced that going to an exceedingly selective college is the only way to insure wealth and happiness.

Still, perhaps something is lost if schools eliminate valedictorians. Like spelling bees, the contest for valedictorian offers a pleasing image of a purer meritocracy, in which learning and performing by the rules leave one hardworking person standing. It seems sad to abolish the tradition—and faintly ridiculous to honor too large a group. (If we're trying to be more sensitive, doesn't it make ordinary students feel *worse* when they can't be one of several dozen valedictorians?) Maybe the answer is to stick to one valedictorian but to make the rules of the contest clear, and to be sure everyone knows them. Maybe the honor should go to the student who is not necessarily the smartest but the most adept at running a peculiarly American kind of academic marathon, one that requires prodigious energy, tactical savvy, and a Tracy Flick-like determination. (Remember the Reese Witherspoon character from "Election"?)

"Over the past ten years, a lot of school districts have been abolishing the valedictorian, and I'm against that," Karen Arnold told me. "On the day we allow anybody who's always wanted to be a quarterback to play on the high-school football team, *then* we can get rid of valedictorians. If we rank anything, we ought to rank what we say is most central to school, which is to say, academic learning."

"I'm shopping my prison video around, but apparently if you don't shiv another inmate or become someone's bitch nobody's interested."

A few weeks, ago, I met Cheryl Barker, the mother of Kylie, the girl at Sarasota High School who, as it turned out, was one of the last two valedictorians at the school. Her daughter went to Furman University, in South Carolina, then to Northwestern. Cheryl Barker was a waitress when Kylie was in high school, and she is now the manager of a family-style restaurant in Sarasota. Her husband owns a print shop, and they have two younger children, a daughter who is graduating from Florida State this year and plans to go to law school, and a son who just graduated in the top ten per cent from Sarasota High.

Cheryl Barker still marvels at how hard Kylie worked, how determined she was, how she never missed a day of school, how she'd go to the library all the time to use the computer because they didn't have one at home. Barker thinks that it was a mistake for the high school to stop naming a valedictorian and a salutatorian. "Those kids all know who the No. 1 and 2 are, anyway," she told me over coffee. "Everyone's so afraid of getting sued or losing their jobs these days that they try too hard to candy-coat things." But, she added, "there are some kids who what they're good at is studying. That's what they do. They deserve something special to strive for. They do." ♦

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TALKING CHIMP GIVES HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE

BY PAUL SIMMS

Hello?

Can everyone hear me? Anyone?

Check, check. Check, one two.

Is this thing on?

Not the microphone—I mean my Electronic Larynx Implant device. Is it working? Hit the "Reboot" button, and see if that ook ook-ook ook.

Ook? Ook? Ook-ook.

Ook!

Ook-ook-oo—why does it seem like it always takes an eternity for the ELI to reboot? I mean, isn't this something we should have ironed out a long time ago?

Oh. O.K. We're back online now? Good. You can all hear me out there? Great.

I'd like to apologize for the technical difficulties up here. One would think that the most important part of setting up the world's first talking-chimp demonstration is making sure that the P.A. is working, but . . . O.K. I guess.

Can I get a bowl of water, please? Thank you. Is the sound guy here? The sound guy. The P.A. technician. Is he here? He's in the back? Just as well. It's just that . . . you know how sometimes you get the feeling that you'd like to bite bite bite bite someone? Anyone? Nothing? Whatever. It'll pass.

Well, anyway: Hello, male humans and female humans! I am indeed what you call a chimpanzee. I do have a human-given proper name—something that sounds like Timmy or Jimmy or Bimmy or Immy—but, for some reason, recognizing and pronouncing human-given proper names is virtually impossible for me. So, yeah, all you skeptics can go ahead and make hay with that one, but I'm doing my best up here.

I guess I should start by acknowledging Dr. Female-Human-Lemon-Colored-Hair and her partner Dr. Male-Human-Persistent-Territory-Threatener for all the great work they've done with me—or, rather, *on* me—in the past few years.

The development of the ELI was a long and arduous process, and there were more than a few times—usually after being shot with a tranquillizer dart and then waking up hours later with excruciatingly painful bleeding stitch holes in my neck and chest regions—when I wasn't sure if it was worth it. But I guess it was, because here we are today, in this beautiful conference room at the Sheraton.

In fact, there were some days when I felt nothing but the desire to bite bite bite bite everyone involved, including, if you can believe it, Mr. Male-Human-Black-Skin-Food-Bringer. Who, for my money, is the true unsung hero of this interminable experiment. This guy is the male human who not only brings me my kibble every morning but also delivers to my cage a metal bucket full of orange wedges every afternoon.

So give him a round of applause, if you would. Stand up, Mr. Male-Human-Black-Skin-Food-Bringer! Don't be shy!

He's not here? O.K., then. I'm not sure why he wasn't invited to share in the limelight today, but I guess we all have our different ways of doing things. Or something. Let's just move right along.

I had planned today to speak mainly about the similarities between humans and chimpanzees. How we're all members of the same family, and so on and so forth.

I feel like I have to take a dump right now.

But instead of speaking about the similarities between humans and—

Ahh. That's better. Dump taken. Where was I?

Similarities. Right. But instead of speaking about similarities I'd like to take this time to—

I'm sorry, you people in the first few

rows. Apparently, my dump somehow offends you? Perhaps if I gather it up and fling it at you, you'll think twice next time before you wrinkle your dinky noses at my healthy and natural exudate. Is that what I should do? Because it's very easy. All I have to do is scoop it up like this and—

Ow!

Take it easy with the leash, Mr. Male-Human-Leash-Puller-If-He-Ever-Turns-His-Back-Bite-Bite-Bite! I wasn't actually going to do it! Sheesh. Why this guy is here but my kibble-and-orange-wedge-bringing buddy isn't, I have no idea.

Where was I?

Could I get another bowl of water, please? Thank you. Give me a moment here.

Ah . . . that's the stuff. The elixir of life, which soothes all but the most surgery-ravaged monkey throat.

Anyway, let's just go to your questions and get this over with, because I'm pretty eager to get back to my cage at this point.

Yes, right here in the front—Mr. Male-Human-Small-Torso-No-Threat?

Right. As I said, I am eager to get back to my cage. That surprises you somehow? Let me explain. I like my cage. My cage is small and manageable. Unlike your cage here, which makes me uneasy. Who needs a cage this large? I mean, come on! How can you be comfortable in a cage so large that the entrance and egress points are so far away that sometimes I think they might not even exist? With a cage this large, any random taker-of-food or biter-of-chimpanzees could enter at any time and take your kibble—or, even worse, your orange wedges—and/or bite bite bite you.

I mean, I know: your human needs are more complex than mine, because you're all fancy and shit. But as for me and my kind? Give me a full kibble trough every morning and regular delivery of orange wedges every afternoon, and I'm good. Maybe an empty beer keg to push from one side of my cage to the other and back again. And of course the presence of (or at least the promise of) a potential female copulation partner within the immediate smellable vicinity.

Now, if you'll excuse me for a moment, I am experiencing a feeling that virtually compels me to try to eat this microphone.

Ow! There's really no reason to go nuts with the leash like that, Mr. Bite-Bite-Bite-Bite-Bite-As-Soon-As-Possible! No one told me the microphone was a "Bad-Boy-Don't-Eat" item. So work with me a little—O.K., Mr. Gouge-Eyes-Eat-Fingers?

Wow, folks. I guess it takes all kinds, huh? Give me a minute while I simultaneously finish off this bowl of water and take another dump.

Ahh.

And ahh again.

Another question?

Yes—you, Ms. Female-Human-Copulation-Candidate, right here on the left. Your question?

Mm-hmm? That's an excellent question. But, before I answer, may I ask you something? When was the last time you copulated?

I can tell by the way you cover your bared teeth with your hand while your cheeks fill with color that my question intrigues you. I like that. Your copulation partner must be gigantic and have a virtually bottomless supply of orange wedges to have snared a mate like you. But I tell you this: one hour with me and my long stick, and you'd be—

Ow! Again with the leash! Always with the leash, Mr. Male-Human-Mount-And-Copulate-With-To-Humiliate-Before-Killing!

You know what? Go ahead with the leash. Seriously, keep it up. Go down in history as the male human who strangled the world's first talking chimpanzee. What do I care?

I happened to be referring to my termite stick, for your kind information. It's a sophisticated food-gathering tool? Maybe you've heard of it? No?

Figures.

All right, I'm done with this now. Take me back to my cage, please. ASAP. Yes, I know that many of you have more questions, but I'm afraid I'm experiencing a strong, unsettling feeling that the empty beer keg back in my cage is currently on exactly the wrong side and needs to be pushed back to the other side as soon as possible. So let me get back to my job, and maybe we can talk again another time. ♦

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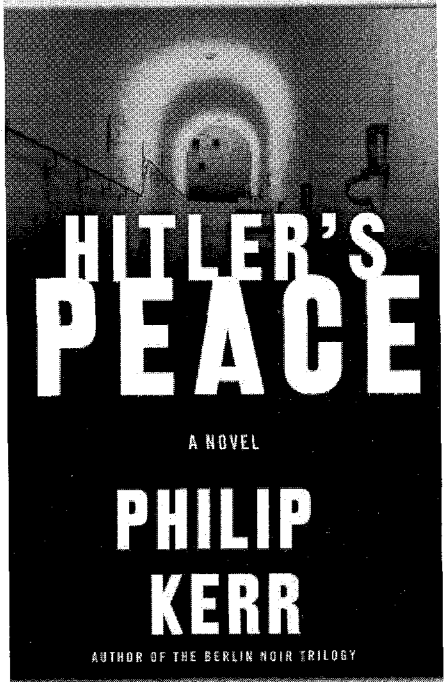

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LETTER FROM ALASKA

LAST WORDS

A language dies.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

The last full-blooded member of the Eyak nation, Chief Marie Smith Jones, lives in Anchorage, Alaska, in a two-story, tan-colored building posted with a notice that warns "No dogs" and "No water beds." On a gray Saturday last spring, I arranged to go visit her. When I arrived at her apartment, no one answered the door. I thought perhaps she had forgotten our appointment and had gone off, but when I called up from the street it turned out that she had decided she did not feel like talking to me that afternoon, or, she implied, ever. I probably never would have got to meet her except that a friend of hers had advised me to bring along, as a gesture of respect, some halibut, a fish prized by the Eyak. Smith Jones asked me if the halibut could fit inside the mailbox. I said I didn't think so.

ch' Gaqeet
siSa't
udach'K'uqaxa'a'ch'
silaax̣
jamachakih
xaax̣ch'kk'sh

The culture and language of the Eyak endured for nearly three thousand years. The only surviving speaker is eighty-seven.

FILIP PAGOWSKI

The Eyak are a mysterious people. By the eighteenth century, they were living near Prince William Sound, in close proximity to other, more formidable nations. (The Chugach called them Ungalarmiut, meaning "the people living to your left as you face the ocean," or, in this case, "Easterners," and the Ahtnas called them Danggane, meaning "uplanders.") Yet for millennia they somehow managed to maintain not only their own culture but also their own language: Eyak is as closely related to Navajo as it is to any tongue spoken by native Alaskans today. In addition to being the last full-blooded Eyak, Smith Jones is also the last remaining native Eyak speaker. When I asked her how she felt about this, she said, "How would you feel if your baby died? If someone asked you, 'What was it like to see it lying in the cradle?' So think about that before you ask that kind of a question."

Smith Jones is eighty-seven and legally blind, with white, wispy hair, a face covered in fine wrinkles, and wrists no wider than a child's. Our meeting that afternoon ended up lasting for several hours and consisted in large measure of exchanges like this. At one point, Smith Jones told me that, like most white people, I had an "iron face"; at another, she announced, "I'm sorry to say, but I hate reporters." In response to a question about an appearance she had made a few years ago at a United Nations conference on indigenous peoples, she brought up the Dalai Lama: "Beautiful words come out of his mouth, but his actions tell differently." In between such pronouncements, Smith Jones periodically softened. She talked about being sent off to work at a cannery at the age of twelve, about her struggles with alcoholism, about the stories her mother used to tell her, and about the difference in taste between a fish that has been caught in a net and a fish that has been harpooned, so that the blood slowly drains from its body. Smith Jones is a heavy smoker, and whenever there was a lull in the conversation she would light up another Winston and start to cough—a deep, hacking, raspy cough. Arrayed around her in her living room were at least a dozen prescription-drug bottles and an unopened Sierra Club calendar from 1992. As I was getting ready to leave, she pulled a small card out of her wallet. On it was written her name in Eyak—Udach' Kuqax̣a'a'ch'—which, she said, translated as "a sound that calls people from afar." I asked her again about being the last Eyak speaker, and this time she responded differently.

"I got that strong feeling right here that it's going to come back," she told me, putting a hand over her heart. "God will send down Eyak to start all over again."

Language is often described as man's essential accomplishment, yet nothing threatens the world's languages so much as human progress. A great wave of language extinctions, it is believed, took place eight or nine thousand years ago, following the so-called Neolithic revolution. As people gave up foraging in favor of farming, they started to live in larger and less isolated communities; certain groups prospered and became dominant, while others—and their languages—were absorbed. A second great wave of extinctions began with Europe's colonization of the Americas and Oceania. It is estimated, for example, that before the arrival of the first white settlers in Australia, in 1788, some two hundred and sixty aboriginal languages were in use. Traces of only a hundred remain. By the end of this century, it is likely that more than half of the six thousand languages still spoken around the globe will have vanished.

Besides Marie Smith Jones, the only other person who understands Eyak is a linguist named Michael Krauss. Krauss, who is seventy, lives in Fairbanks, but when I phoned him last winter he had recently been given a diagnosis of cancer, and was preparing to go to New York to consult with doctors about a course of treatment. "What's happened is very ironic," he told me. "I made a proposal to the National Science Foundation to study Eyak in 1963. In it, I remarked there were only a few speakers left and the youngest"—Smith Jones—"was already, I think I said, 'elderly.' Now this 'elderly' lady calls me in alarm over my health."

I finally met up with Krauss in Seattle, a few months after we first spoke. He was staying with his daughter, and convalescing after surgery. Krauss has an open face, wavy white hair, and a manner at once passionate and professorial. Until his illness, he had had a broad, even stout, figure; now he was painfully thin. His daughter kept urging him to eat something. He kept saying that he would, and then leaving the food that she brought him untouched.

Krauss traces his interest in linguistics back to his childhood. Growing up in Cleveland, he was sent off to Hebrew school, where he studied a language that had nearly died and then been resurrected. After Hebrew faded as a spoken language, around two thousand years ago, it was preserved ceremonially and transmitted through texts. Then, in the late nineteenth century, the language was revived by early Zionists. So successful was this revival that today it is the preferred tongue of at least three million people. "It's a very remarkable history of survival against odds," Krauss told me. "It

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WHO IS THE
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FROM A SERIES OF ORIGINAL COMMENTARIES

By Marin Alsop
Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
and Conductor Laureate of the Colorado Symphony

I choose Leonard Bernstein. As a composer he embodied the American sound, blending genres, crossing boundaries. As a conductor, he was the first American to distinguish himself throughout Europe. But beyond the musical dimensions, he was a great humanitarian.

I'm in my forties. I grew up in an era when you could see Bernstein conducting on network television. Try to imagine that now. You could see his "Young People's Concerts," which brought music to children and drew them in to its richness. The way I fell in love with Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" was through Bernstein's narration.

And you could also see and hear Bernstein, in that charismatic voice, as a public person talking about issues of the day, standing up to be counted on race and on the Vietnam War—whether you agreed with him or not. You'd have to think hard to find an artist doing so much for so many people today.

A whole generation now doesn't know the man who was ubiquitous back then, but that generation is still living with his influence.

Think of "West Side Story." This is Bernstein taking Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" and bringing it into his era, the nineteen-fifties, and making a historical work of art come alive for his generation, with music, dance, humor, and the language of the street. It was a risk back then. It defines musical theatre today.

"West Side Story" is the piece the public knows best, but you could say that everything Bernstein touched was transformed. He was able to make dusty relics like "Candide" come to life—not just musical relics, but literary relics. (He would be heard to say that the works themselves weren't dusty, but rather it was people who let the dust gather.)

Bernstein was a leader. Whether he was championing contemporary composers or lecturing on the classics, his passion and enthusiasm led everything he did. (As a teacher he was immensely generous and encouraging.) But the last thing he wanted was for his students to mimic him. He'd say, "don't imitate me, but do it like this." Where's that leadership today, in the arts or anywhere else?

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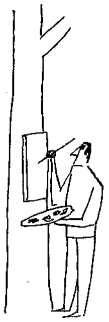
inculcated in me a real sense of what language means to nationhood and the survival of identity." Later, Krauss did graduate work at Harvard, and learned, among other languages, Gaelic, Icelandic, and Faeroese, the last of which is spoken only by the fifty thousand or so inhabitants of the Faeroe Islands, northwest of Scotland. He became fascinated by the way that some languages, like Faeroese, continued to thrive even as many other, much more broadly based languages were vanishing. In 1960, Krauss moved across the country to start the linguistics department at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.



As soon as Krauss got to Fairbanks, he set about assessing the condition of the state's native languages. For nearly three-quarters of a century, children in Alaska had been prohibited from studying, or even speaking, their own languages at school, under a policy established by the territory's earliest commissioner of education, Sheldon Jackson. "Pupils are required to speak and write English exclusively," Jackson, who was also a Presbyterian missionary, wrote in 1888. "Instruction in their vernacular is not only of no use to them but is detrimental to their speedy education and civilization." As a result of this policy, which endured until 1972, virtually all the native languages in Alaska fell into decline. Most imperilled of all was Eyak. Krauss was immediately drawn to it, both because of its fragility and because of its tenacity.

"We must not forget that all the languages we find today, even moribund relics like Eyak, are themselves the relatively few victors in the constant struggle for linguistic survival," he later wrote, for they have lasted "long enough to be at least documented, as compared with the many more languages which have disappeared forever without a recognizable trace."

Eyak is neither a linguistic isolate, like Basque, nor a part of any modern language community. Rather, it might be described as the spinster aunt of the Athabascan language group, whose members include Navajo and Apache. All Athabascan languages descend from a common ancestor—now extinct—that linguists call proto-Athabascan, which is believed to have originated in the interior of Alaska or the Yukon Territory around the time of Christ. Eyak is thought to have broken off from the even more ancient linguistic branch that led to proto-Athabascan sometime around 1000 B.C. (A technique known as "glottochronology"—the phonetic analog of carbon dating—can be used to determine the point at which related languages diverged.) For Eyak to have maintained its distinctive character for so long, its speakers must have spent the better part of the past three thousand years living essentially in isolation. One of the many unanswered questions about them is where.

Various clues within the language itself suggest that the Eyak were, at one point, an inland people. Their word for "downriver," for instance, *li'*, also means "into the closed end of something," hinting that the Eyak's route to the sea was blocked, perhaps by glaciers. By the time the first whites arrived in Alaska, though, the Eyak were living along the southern coast, from the Prince William Sound down to what is now the town of Yakutat. The Russians, who were trying to establish a network of trading posts in the area, encountered them in the seventeen-nineties. Relations between the two peoples were occasionally tense; in 1799 a group of Eyak massacred a Russian hunting party, in retaliation for which the Russians tortured and killed an Eyak man. Nevertheless, some Eyak were converted to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Although few reliable records from the nineteenth century survive—if they ever existed—Eyak territory seems to have shrunk dramatically during that period. Several villages disappeared, probably wiped out by smallpox or measles. Others were assimilated by the Tlingit, a friendly but more powerful tribe that was expanding from the southeast. (If the English-speaking Americans hadn't appeared, Eyak might eventually have been done in by Tlingit.) By the eighteen-seventies, there were only about two hundred Eyak left, mostly in settlements near what is now the town of Cordova, on the Copper River delta. Around 1890, several salmon canneries were built in the neighborhood of Cordova, a development that, in addition to bringing new contagions, disrupted the Eyak's food supply. (A favored fishing technique of the canneries was to use dynamite.)

In 1933, when two anthropologists arrived in Cordova to study the Eyak, the community consisted of just thirty-eight members. The anthropologists, Frederica de Laguna and Kaj Birket-Smith, attempted to chronicle what remained of the Eyak's traditions. Their study, "The Eyak Indians of the Copper River Delta, Alaska," is at once exhaustive and highly sketchy. "Methods of working stone have been forgotten by the Eyak," the authors note. When they try to ascertain the rituals associated with the onset of menstruation, one Eyak tells them that girls are secluded in a special hut for a month, another says for twelve months, and a third says for six months—and not in a hut but in a "special room." Among the many customs that de Laguna and Birket-Smith attribute to the Eyak are building small wooden houses over the graves of their loved ones, observing a taboo against sewing the skins of land and sea animals into the same garment, and burning children's toys in order to secure good weather. Last spring, I phoned de Laguna, who was ninety-seven and living outside Philadelphia. (She spent almost forty years teaching at Bryn Mawr.) I had heard that she had a large collection of photographs from the 1933 expedition, and I asked if she would let me come see them. She said no, she didn't have much time left, and whatever she did have she needed for her own work. "I assure you that growing old is not for sissies," she told me. Six months later, she died.

When Michael Krauss began his study of Eyak, in 1963, only six people who knew the language were left. Four of them, including Marie Smith Jones and her sister Sophie Borodkin, lived in Cordova. The remaining two lived in Yakutat, two hundred and fifty miles to the southeast. The six spoke with varying degrees of proficiency, but none used Eyak in daily life. As it happens, the last person who had preferred Eyak to either English or Tlingit had been Smith Jones's mother, Minnie Stevens. When she died, in the spring of 1961, Eyak ceased, practically speaking, to be a living language.

Krauss decided that the best way to preserve what was left of Eyak was to assemble a dictionary. This meant first creating an Eyak orthography. As is the case with many Native American languages, Eyak uses sounds—for exam-

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ple, glottalized consonants and nasalized vowels—that simply are not represented by the Latin alphabet. For most of these sounds, Krauss used either standard linguistic symbols or symbols borrowed from other languages. (A glottalized "t," for instance, is written *t'*.)

Krauss next spent several summers shuttling between Cordova and Yakutat, collecting words. He would point to the parts of his face and ask an Eyak speaker to pronounce the terms for "nose," or *siniik'* (which is really "my nose," since in Eyak you wouldn't say "nose" without indicating to whom, or to what, the nose belonged); "mouth," or *sisa't;* and "eyes," or *silaaẋ.* Then he would ask the same speaker to name the features of his or her face unprompted. In this way, he learned, for instance, that the Eyak have a word—*siniik'adach'uuch'*—for the groove between the upper lip and the septum, for which English speakers have only the clinical term "philtrum." (The Eyak word translates roughly as "nose crumple.") Occasionally, his informants had rather vivid imaginations and, failing to recall a word, would make one up. When I suggested that the process seemed treacherous, Krauss dismissed this, saying, "Any linguist worth his salt should be able to do the philological workup."

By 1970, Krauss had compiled more than six thousand terms and come, in his words, "reasonably close to plumbing the depths of living memory in Eyak." The original version of his dictionary ran to thirty-three hundred hand-typed pages. To a non-linguist, it is nearly incomprehensible:

> Demeẋch' (variant of qemeẋch'; L certain of authenticity) demeẋch'ł (noun, ḋ-class, with -ɬ-instrumental suffix) 'soft rotten spot or hole in ice over body of water': demeẋch'łda'luw 'large treacherous spot in ice' L, demeẋch'łda'e' q'aɢiiyaaq 'don't fall in treacherous spot in ice!' (certain she has heard this) L.

Linguists typically classify languages according to word order. English is an S.V.O. (subject-verb-object) language: the subject of a sentence usually comes first, followed by the verb and then the object, as in "The woman drove a car." Eyak, by contrast, is an S.O.V., or subject-object-verb, language, so that a direct translation of the sentence "*Lixah daẋunh sasheht*" would be "The grizzly bear the man killed." As in many Native American languages, both prefixes and suffixes can be added to verbs, resulting in forms that make distinctions not just in tense—did an action happen in the past or in the present?—but also in the degree to which an action has been completed, whether it occurs regularly, what part of the body is affected, and whether it is being done sincerely. Thus, in Eyak, the question "Are you going to keep tickling me in the face in the same spot repeatedly?" is rendered as one word, *xuqu'liiłẋaaẋch'kk'sh.*

It is the differences between English and Eyak that are, in Krauss's view, the reason for preserving it. He asked me if I'd ever taken French. "*Tout à l'heure il sera là,*" he said. "*Tout à l'heure il était là.* Well, what the hell does '*tout à l'heure*' mean? We have no English word for that. How would you define it—'now plus or minus a short while'? The minute you learn French, you have to learn '*tout à l'heure,*' and it makes you think differently from the way you ever thought before."

He went on, "Each language is a unique repository of facts and knowledge about the world that we can ill afford to lose, or, at the least, facts and knowledge about some history and people that have their place in the understanding of mankind. Every language is a treasury of human experience. Eyak doesn't give a damn about tenses. But it sure does give a damn about other things, much more than I do. Therefore it broadens your thinking, enriches your ability to understand the world—to deal with reality and experience." I pointed out that it has always been the dream of a certain brand of idealist that mankind would acquire—or perhaps recover—a universal language. Krauss said he had no objection to that, provided that people continued to speak their native languages as well.

"Having the presumption to think we can do with just one language is a mistake," he told me. "Not until we reach the age of enlightenment do we really know what we're doing. And I'd like to see someone claim we've reached the age of enlightenment." I asked Krauss whether he thought that Eyak, like Hebrew, could ever be revived. He said that he rather doubted it. Then what had he hoped to accomplish?

"I've never defined that for myself," he said. "I'm doing it because I'm me, and Eyak is Eyak."

The town of Cordova, the last home of the Eyak, sits on the eastern shore of Prince William Sound, on a narrow bay called Orca Inlet. To the north are the snow-covered peaks of the Chugach Mountains and to the east the marshy plains of the Copper River delta. Just beyond the delta lies the Bering Glacier, which is the largest glacier in Alaska. Cordova is still a fishing village, and the tempo of life is determined mostly by the comings and goings of various species of salmon. When I went to visit, last August, the silver salmon were running, and the streams were full of enormous, spent-looking fish, laz-

"It was the featured wine in the movie 'Barfly.'"

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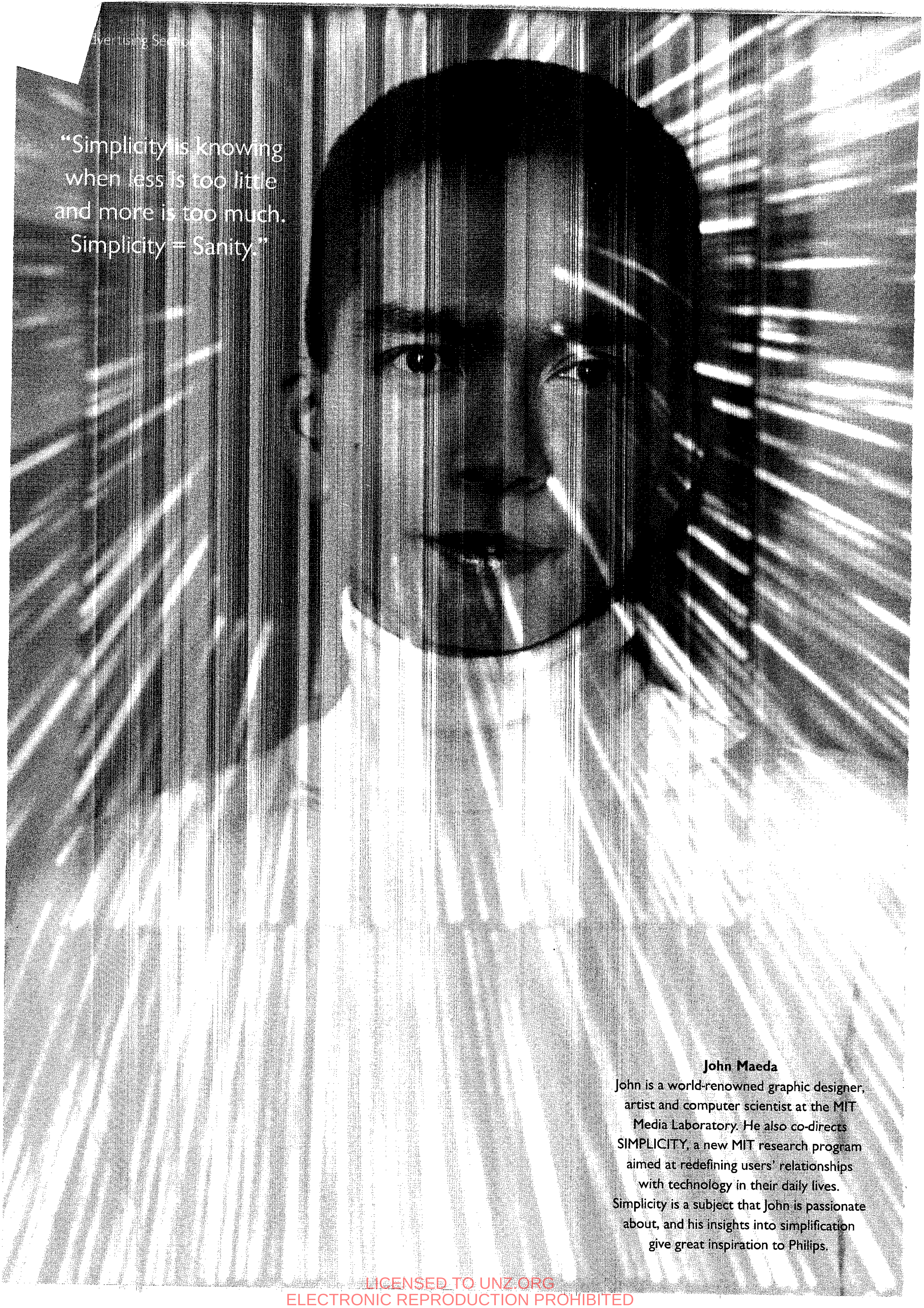
"Simplicity is knowing
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and more is too much.
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John Maeda

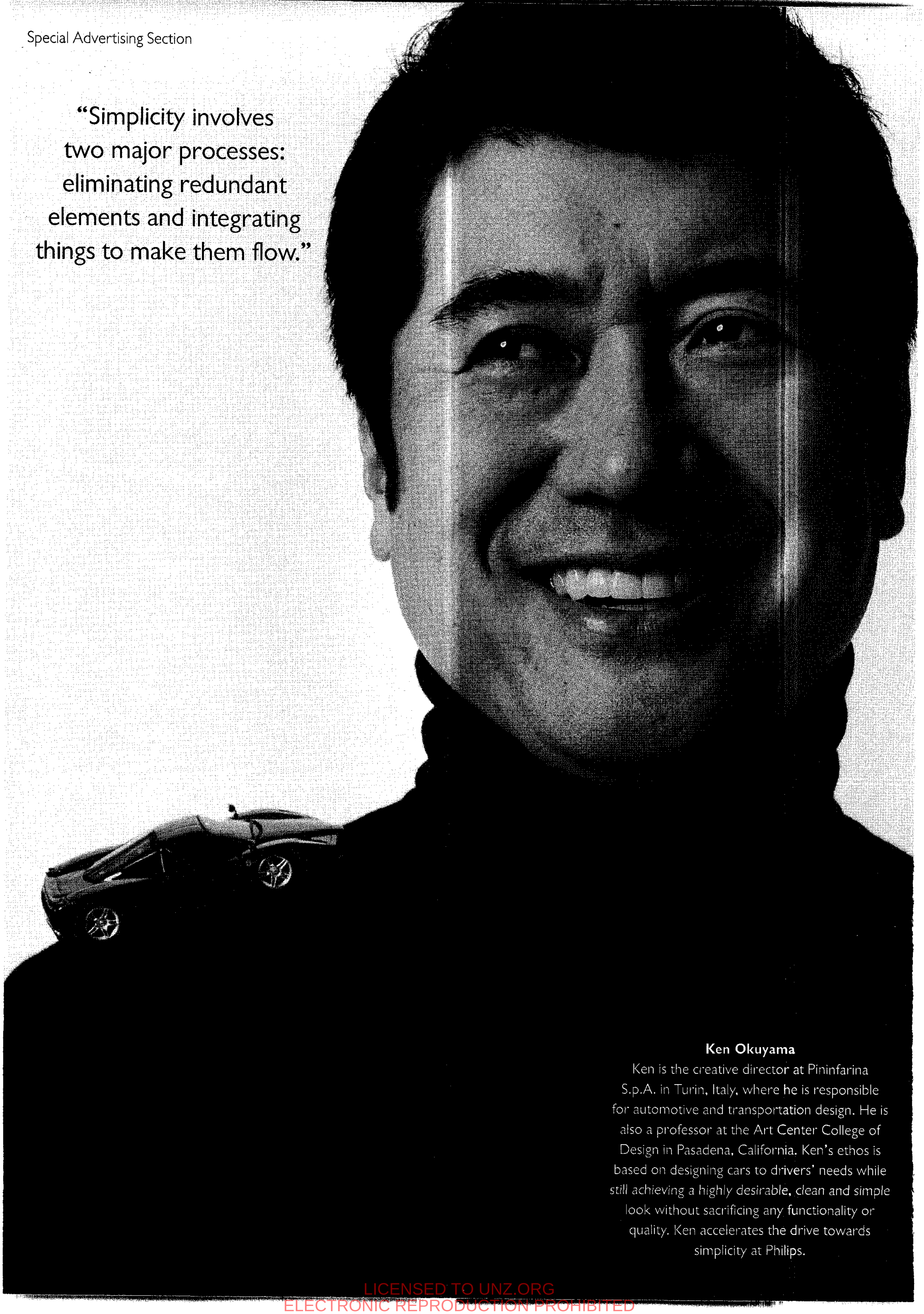
John is a world-renowned graphic designer, artist and computer scientist at the MIT Media Laboratory. He also co-directs SIMPLICITY, a new MIT research program aimed at redefining users' relationships with technology in their daily lives. Simplicity is a subject that John is passionate about, and his insights into simplification give great inspiration to Philips.

Sara Berman

Sara is recognized as one of the most talented young fashion designers, with collections selling in the U.K., U.S., Europe and Japan. Her approach to cut and design is based on simplicity and clarity of vision, but she acknowledges that simplicity is often the most complicated thing to achieve. Her insights and creativity are excellent additions to the Philips Simplicity Advisory Board.

"Simplicity is the basis of good design. Style is not about complication and excess, but about being designed around the individual."

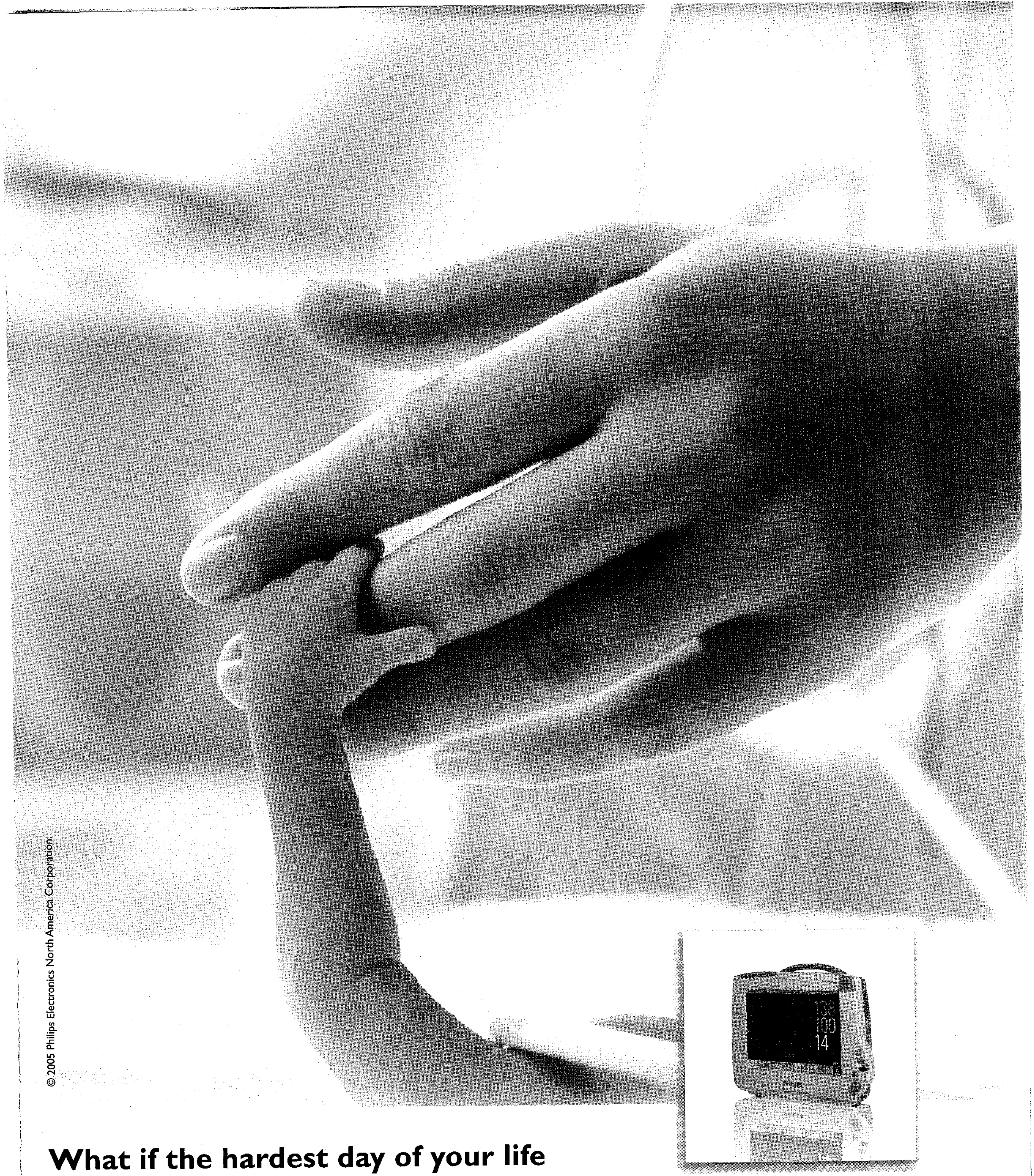
Section photographed by Peggy Sirota.



“Simplicity involves
two major processes:
eliminating redundant
elements and integrating
things to make them flow.”

Ken Okuyama

Ken is the creative director at Pininfarina S.p.A. in Turin, Italy, where he is responsible for automotive and transportation design. He is also a professor at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. Ken’s ethos is based on designing cars to drivers’ needs while still achieving a highly desirable, clean and simple look without sacrificing any functionality or quality. Ken accelerates the drive towards simplicity at Philips.



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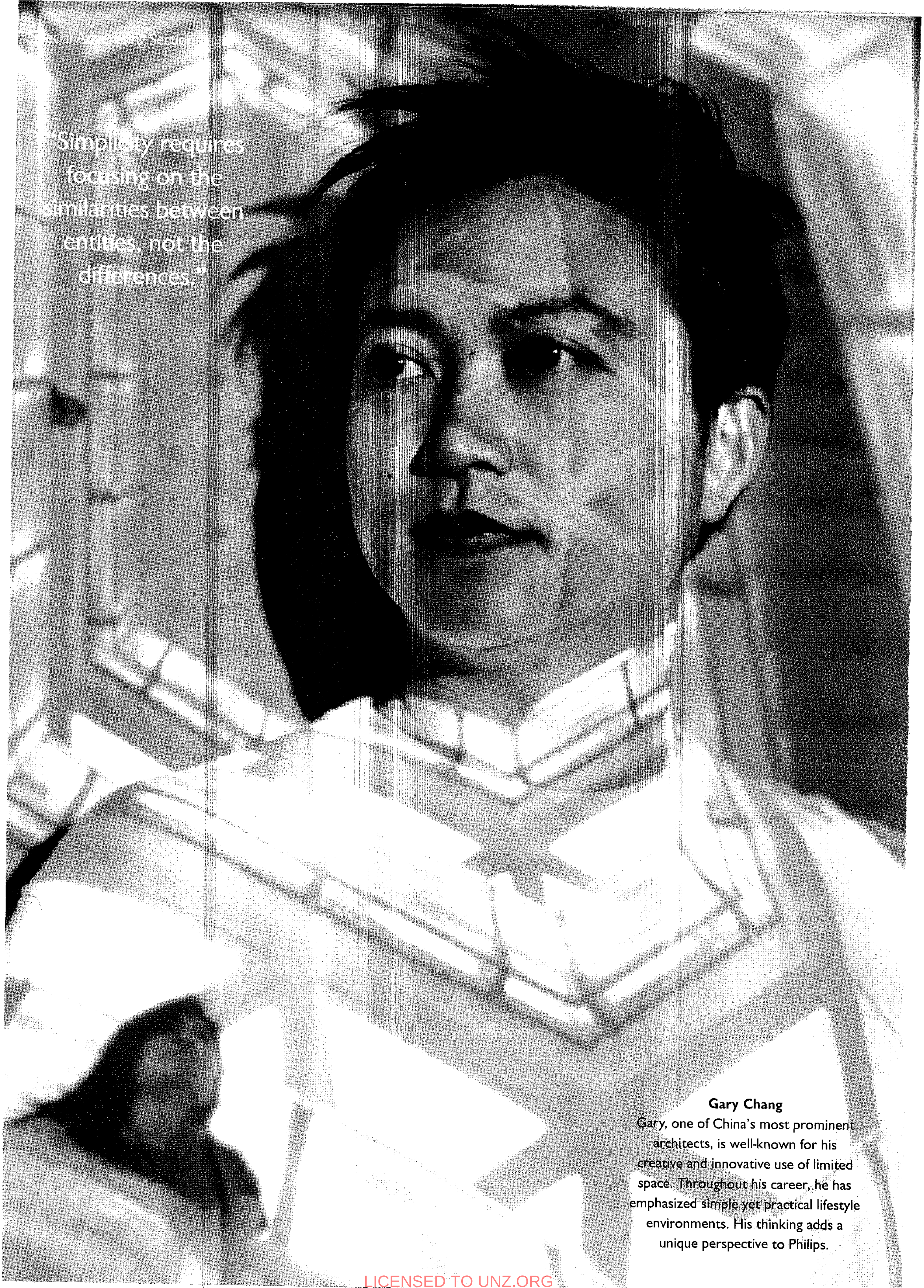
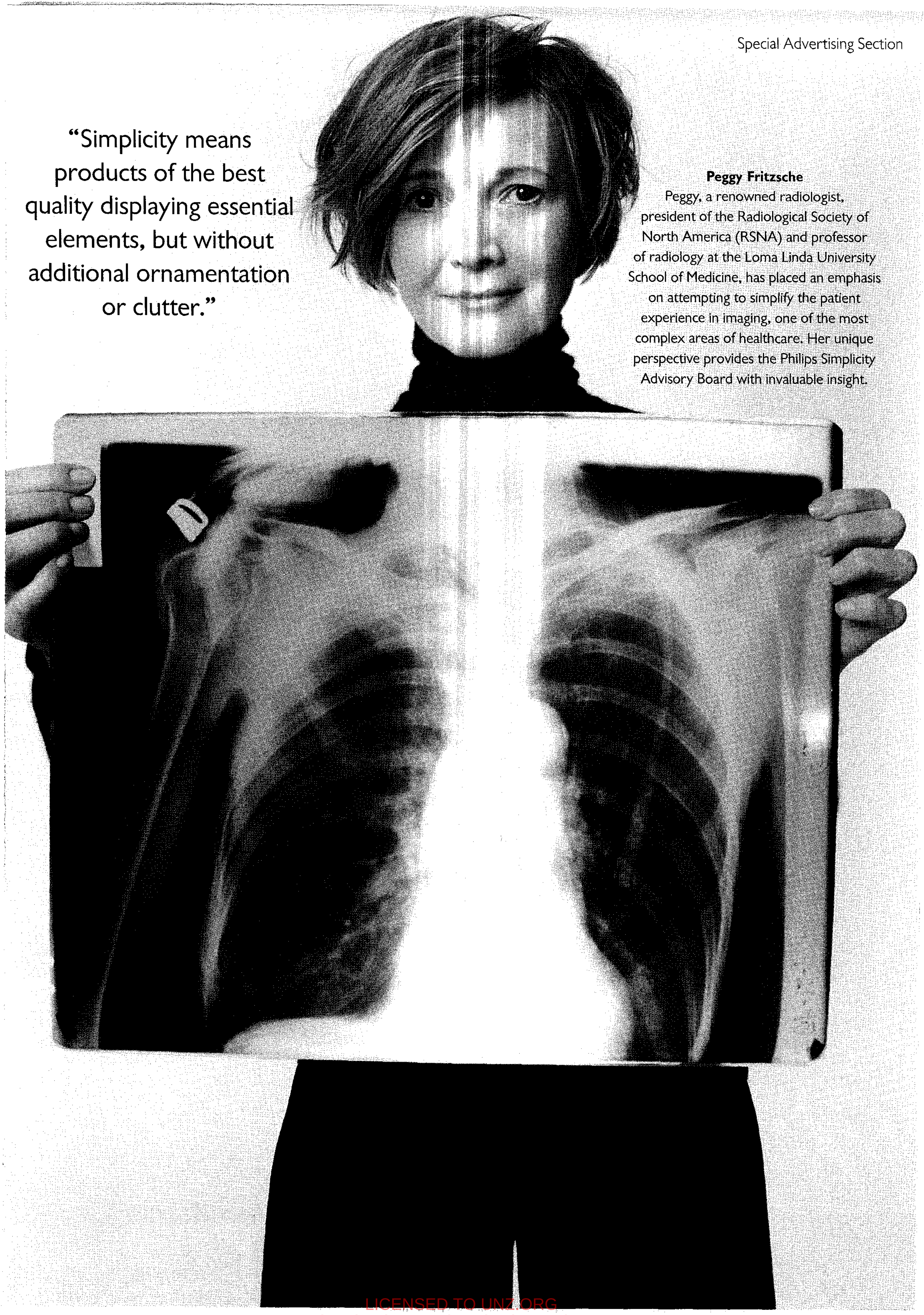


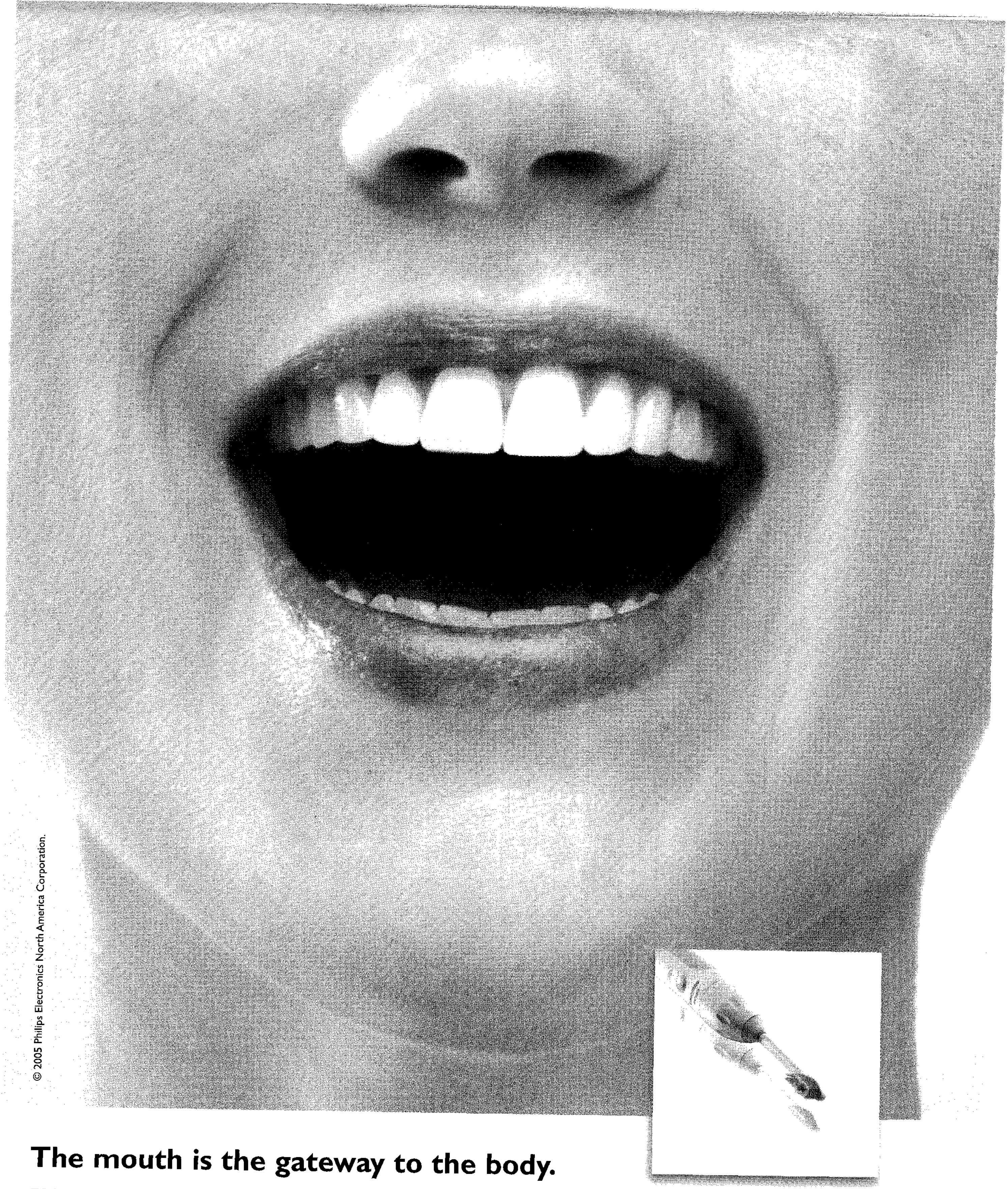
"Simplicity requires focusing on the similarities between entities, not the differences."

Gary Chang
Gary, one of China's most prominent architects, is well-known for his creative and innovative use of limited space. Throughout his career, he has emphasized simple yet practical lifestyle environments. His thinking adds a unique perspective to Philips.



"Simplicity means products of the best quality displaying essential elements, but without additional ornamentation or clutter."

Peggy Fritzsche
Peggy, a renowned radiologist, president of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) and professor of radiology at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine, has placed an emphasis on attempting to simplify the patient experience in imaging, one of the most complex areas of healthcare. Her unique perspective provides the Philips Simplicity Advisory Board with invaluable insight.



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ing around in circles, preparing to die.

The few traces of Eyak culture that remain in Cordova could easily fit inside a suburban garage. A couple of them—a dugout canoe and a spear—are on display at the Cordova Historical Museum. (Also on exhibit are artifacts from Alaska's first oil field, in nearby Katalla, and memorabilia from the town's annual Ice Worm Festival, a Mardi Gras-like affair held the first weekend in February.) Whatever else has survived of Eyak culture is scattered in the woods. One afternoon, I took a hike out to the remnants of an Eyak longhouse. It had been reduced to four logs, arranged in a rectangle. Blueberry bushes were growing out of what had once, apparently, been the floor. Nearby were some graves, marked with Russian Orthodox crosses that were falling into the ground.

The area around Cordova is resource-rich; in addition to the salmon, the oil, and the forests, there is also a huge, as yet unmined coal deposit about fifty miles east of town. In recent years, the pressure to exploit these resources has been growing—as has local resistance, much of it led by a group called the Eyak Preservation Council. In an unusual twist, the development battles in Cordova have often pitted one native group against another. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 granted billions of dollars' worth of surface and subsurface rights to a complicated network of native-run boards, and the founder and director of the Eyak Preservation Council, Dune Lankard, who is himself a quarter Eyak, has more than once sued a native corporation of which he is a member. A few years ago, *Time* named Lankard a "hero for the planet," in recognition of his work to protect the region. Marie Smith Jones, meanwhile, gave him the Eyak name Jamachakih, which translates as "little bird that screams really loud." Although he does not speak any Eyak, Lankard says that he would like one day to be able to file lawsuits in the language.

"We are going to save the language whether anybody likes it or not," he told me. "And we are going to save the land whether anybody likes it or not." He added, "I really think that the Eyak have a lot to offer this screwed-up world, and we are not talking rocket science."

As it happened, my visit to Cordova coincided with the conclusion of a seven-year effort known as the Eyak Language Project. The project was largely the work of a former TV reporter from Anchorage named Laura Bliss Spaan. She first heard about the Eyak in 1992, when she was sent to Cordova to cover the Ice Worm Festival. "When Eyak gets ahold of you, it's really hard to escape," she explained to me. Bliss Spaan arranged for Michael Krauss to give a series of lessons on Eyak grammar, which she videotaped. She then gathered up all the records of the language which she could find—Krauss's hand-typed dictionary, transcriptions he had made of Eyak legends, audio recordings of an Eyak speaker from the nineteen-seventies, video of Marie Smith Jones—and computerized them. Altogether, the archive fit on five DVDs. When I arrived in Cordova, Bliss Spaan was there to deliver the archive to the local cultural council. She offered me an extra set of disks that she had brought along. As I took them from her, I had the odd sensation of holding in my hand all that there was—or ever would be—of Eyak.

The only way out of Cordova is by boat or plane. Flying back to Anchorage and then to New York, I loaded the disks that Bliss Spaan had given me onto my laptop. I listened to Krauss lecture on Eyak vowels, heard Smith Jones talk about how to say hello, and read some Eyak legends about fantastic creatures. In "Blind Man and Loon," a man's sight is restored by a magical bird. In "Woman and Octopus," a woman falls in love with a spirited cephalopod. There was also a "Lament for Eyak," which Krauss had recorded in 1972. In it, the narrator describes what it is like to be a member of a vanishing people:

K'aadih ulah uuch' q'e' iiłi'ee.
Sitinhɢayuudik six̣a' iinsdi'ahł.
Sitinhɢayuu six̣a' lisłi'ahłch'aht q'al
    ahnuu si'ahtɢayuu q'uh yaan' q'e'
    disłiqahqł,
al iisinh.
Aan,
deelehtdal dlaɢaxuu,
ts'it dlaɢaxuu atxsłilahł?
Atɢaxłalaał.

Useless to go back there.
My uncles too have all died out on me.
After my uncles all died out my aunts
    next fell,
to die.
Yes,
why is it I alone,
just I alone have managed to survive?
I survive. ♦

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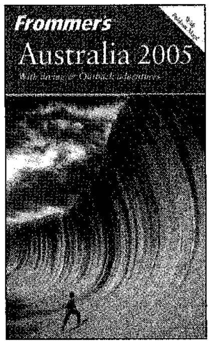

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THE MAN IN THE PALACE

Hamid Karzai and the dilemma of being Afghanistan's President.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

On May 11th, riots broke out in the city of Jalalabad, in eastern Afghanistan. The violence followed a *Newsweek* story—which has since been retracted—on new allegations that American interrogators at Guantánamo Bay had desecrated the Koran. In the next few days, the protests spread to the capital, Kabul, and throughout the country. In some provincial towns, police fired into crowds. But early on there were signs that the violence had less to do with *Newsweek* than with Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai.

On the first night of rioting, copies of an anonymous letter circulated in the streets of Kabul. This Night Letter, as it was called, was a vehement exhortation to Afghans to oppose Karzai, whom it accused of being un-Islamic, an ally of the Taliban, and a "U.S.A. servant." The letter said that Karzai had put the interests of his "evil master" ahead of those of Afghans, and it called for leaders who were proven patriots, mujahideen—a synonym, in this case, for members of the Northern Alliance, many of whom are now warlords and regional strongmen—to defy him. The timing was opportune: Karzai was on a trip to Europe, in search of financial backing. His next destination was Washington, where he planned to discuss a pact that would guarantee the United States a long-term military presence in Afghanistan.

Karzai seemed unsure of how to respond. Even as the unrest continued, he stuck to his itinerary and, from Brussels, called the riots a "manifestation of democracy." When he finally arrived home, several days later, he held a press conference, at which he blamed unspecified "enemies of peace" for the violence. He asked, "Who are they who have such enmity with Afghanistan, a nation that is begging for money to build the country and construct buildings, and during the night they come and destroy it?"

The nineteen thousand American and eight thousand NATO troops stationed in Afghanistan were placed on high alert, and government officials met with protesters. By the time the violence abated, at least seventeen people were dead, and government buildings and aid-agency offices had been torched. It was the largest display of anti-American feeling since the fall of the Taliban, in late 2001.

The next week, the *Times* published, in rapid succession, a State Department memorandum saying that Karzai was "unwilling to assert strong leadership" to end drug trafficking—Afghanistan is the source of most of the world's heroin—and a new report on the abuse of prisoners in Afghanistan. The prisoner-abuse story described how American soldiers had beaten two Afghan men to death at Bagram airbase, north of Kabul. One of them was a twenty-two-year-old cabdriver who appeared to have no connection to terrorism. Karzai was in the incongruous position of defending his record as a steadfast ally in the war on drugs while expressing horror at the reports of American abuse.

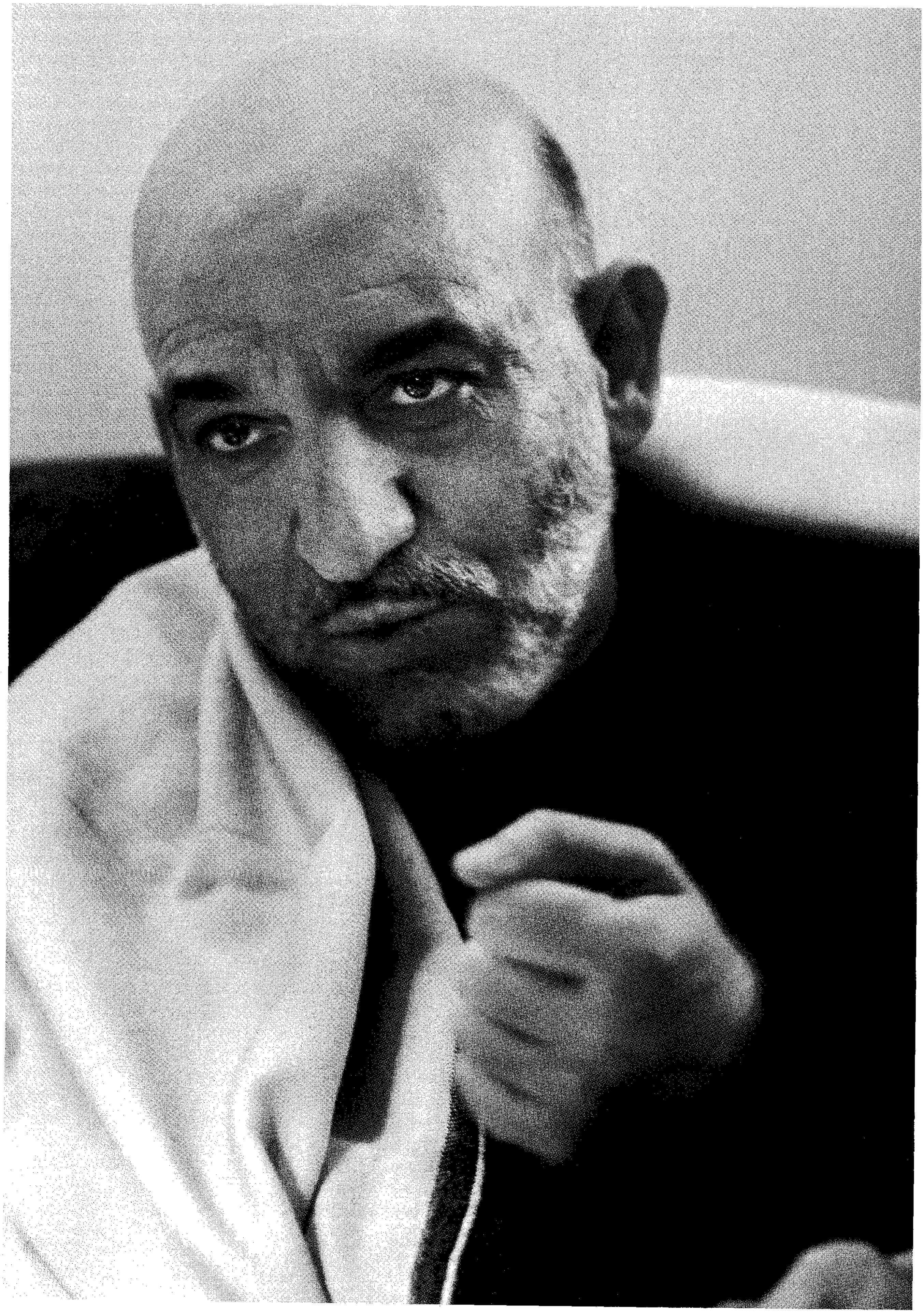
There are other contradictions. Afghans don't generally question Karzai's good intentions, but they complain about his ineffectiveness and the corruption in his government. Karzai is an odd combination of decency and diffidence, a committed democrat but a regal figure who is comfortable leaving the business of governing to others—including his American advisers. Habiba Sarabi, whom Karzai appointed governor of Bamiyan province, making her Afghanistan's first woman governor, said of him, "He was quite popular during the transitional period. And he still is, because there are no alternatives to him. His character and his democratic inclinations are higher than those of all the others." Unfortunately, she said, "sometimes he makes promises he can't follow up."

When I spoke to Karzai in Kabul, not long before the riots, he told me repeatedly that Afghans had actively sought close ties to the United States. When the Taliban were in power, "it was Afghan people that kept going to see the U.S. and asking it to come and help Afghanistan—and also asking to help the U.S.," he said. "*We* were the persuaders. *We* brought the U.S. in. It's been a success. And that's why I got the vote." Now he was confronting the limits of that success, and he appeared surprised and aggrieved.

Last week, as he headed to Washington, Karzai said that he would demand "justice" for Afghan prisoners and control over U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. The requests only underscored his lack of authority; the alleged abuse had taken place in his own country, and if American troops weren't there, Karzai almost certainly wouldn't be, either. As it turned out, Karzai signed an agreement at his meeting with President Bush that affirmed the U.S. military's right to operate freely. And when, at a press conference, with Bush at his side, he was asked about prisoner abuse, he said that it made him "sad," but quickly added that the actions of a few soldiers should not sully the image of the U.S. government. After his brief flash of assertiveness, he seemed more a supplicant than ever. His relationship with Washington—which gave him security, status, and a certain amount of pride—revealed itself in all its dependency and weakness.

When I arrived in Kabul this spring, after Afghanistan's most severe winter in many years, the snow on the jagged black mountains that ring the city had begun to melt, and the streets, most

The people "know the means of this country," Karzai said. "They know what we can't do." Photograph by Samantha Appleton.



Fr. Roast
DecaF
PUSH

"I want to have at least two children—I have too much guilt to give for just one."

• •

of them unpaved, were either clogged with mud and raw sewage or, on the days the sun shone, concealed by swirling clouds of dust. But it was easy to see how profoundly Kabul had changed since the fall of the Taliban. The last time I was in Afghanistan, in the summer of 2002, the honeycomb of wattle-and-daub houses on the slopes surrounding the city was mostly uninhabited. The ghost houses gaped at the city below—their windows, their tin roofs, their doors had all been ransacked. Now, as refugees have flooded back to Afghanistan—three million have returned since the fall of the Taliban brought an end to major fighting—the houses have mostly been reoccupied. Down on the flatlands, new neighborhoods have appeared among the ruins of old ones. Several high-rise commercial buildings, with colored mirrored glass, Dubai style, are being built. The population of Kabul has multiplied, from about a million to an estimated three million inhabitants, and it is still growing.

In the narrow streets of the city center, thousands of newly imported cars compete with cyclists, water buffalo, and poor Hazara men, who take the most menial jobs, pulling carts. The armored convoys of the NATO peacekeeping forces and the Humvees and Land Rovers of American and British troops speed to and from their bases. Other Americans, out of uniform and accompanied by gunmen, move around in large S.U.V.s with smoked-glass windows. Most Afghans assume, probably correctly, that they are Special Forces commandos or C.I.A. operatives; in any case, they are the most overt reminder that a war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda continues mostly out of sight.

The American operations, which have confined the Taliban mainly to the backcountry and the Pakistani border region, are extremely controversial, especially among Pashtuns, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group. (Most of the Taliban are Pashtuns, as is Karzai.) Ahmad Shah Ahmadzai, a prominent Pashtun politician, told me that, before the recent revelations, when he visited Karzai as part of a delegation to protest the U.S. military's raids and its detention of people from Pashtun communities, Karzai had said, "What can I do? The Americans don't listen to me." Ahmadzai threw up his hands in a gesture of incredulity and contempt. "Karzai is President with the will of the Afghan people, but in some aspects he is an American puppet, too," he said.

Karzai was appointed interim President at a U.N.-sponsored meeting of exiles in Bonn in December, 2001, two months into the American bombing campaign. A Presidential election was postponed twice because of threats from the Taliban, but it was finally held, last October, and Karzai won, with fifty-five per cent of the vote. (Parliamentary elections have yet to take place.) His main opponent, Yunis Qanouni, a former Northern Alliance official, achieved only sixteen per cent.

Now Karzai presides over a country of about twenty-nine million citizens, most of whom are poor and illiterate, with an economy that relies almost entirely on international aid and the illicit harvest of poppies, the raw material for opium and heroin. The drug business employs some 2.3 million Afghans, with revenues equal to sixty per cent of the legal G.D.P. Since 2001, the poppy harvest has soared fifteen hundred per cent; by most estimates, Afghanistan is fast becoming a narco-state. The unemployment rate is about thirty per cent and the crime rate is spiralling upward.

And yet this year nearly five million children, including nearly two million girls, attended school, compared with under a million total in 2001. Women now have the right to vote, and four million registered for the last election; three of Karzai's thirty-two cabinet ministers are women. International aid organizations have trouble operating outside of Kabul, because of security concerns—dozens of relief workers have been assassinated—but teams led by British and American forces are laying roads and building bridges and schools in much of the country. (While Operation Iraqi Freedom has cost the lives of more than sixteen hundred American servicemen and women, a hundred and forty-four American soldiers have died in and around Afghanistan.)

How much credit or blame Karzai can take for these developments is unclear. Most of Karzai's government ministers have an American counterpart who is a member of the so-called Afghan Reconstruction Team. One American official in Kabul described the team to me as a sort of shadow government: "Khalilzad's cabinet"—a reference to Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been the American Ambassador in Kabul since 2003. The official said that the team members acted as "senior counsellors" to the Afghan government. He noted, for example, that they helped write Karzai's inauguration speech.

Virtually every Afghan I spoke to was troubled by Karzai's close relationship with Khalilzad. The Ambassador is often referred to, sarcastically, as "the second President," or, sometimes, simply as President Khalilzad. Habiba Sarabi told me, "The problem is that Khalilzad makes policy pronouncements himself, and speaks more strongly than the President does. So people naturally think he is more powerful than President Karzai."

Khalilzad, who was born in Afghanistan, seems to enjoy the image that he has acquired as Afghanistan's American viceroy. He was an official in the Reagan and George H. W. Bush Administrations, and has known Karzai for many years because of his work as a foreign-policy analyst and in Afghan exile circles. On the half-dozen occasions I saw Karzai and Khalilzad together, they did nothing to conceal the warmth of their friendship. It was obvious that Karzai was closer to him than to many of his own ministers.

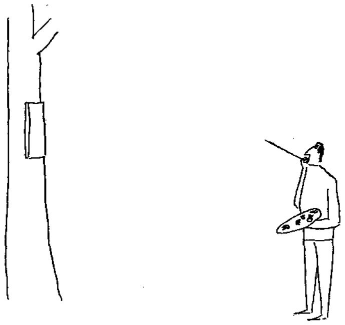
The American official in Kabul, referring to Khalilzad by his nickname, said that, until recently, "it was like Zal had to hold Karzai's hand even when he went to the bathroom. He consulted him on everything before he did anything." But this official also told me that, since the election, things had begun to change: "Now it's more like he calls Zal afterward and tells him what he's done and asks him what he thinks." An American adviser to Karzai said, "He and Zal are really close friends, who spend more time together than most husbands and wives; they eat dinner together almost every night. Karzai doesn't just consult him for decisions—he also gets emotional support from him." Earlier this month, President Bush nominated Khalilzad to replace John Negroponte as the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq. The official said, "Personally, I think it's a healthy thing that Zal is leaving. It will give Karzai a chance to become his own man. And it won't be healthy just for Karzai; it'll be healthy for Afghanistan, too."

When I arrived for my first interview with Karzai at Kabul's old royal palace, where he lives and works, I found him walking in the garden with Khalilzad. He gave me a friendly wave, as did the Ambassador, and said that he would be with me shortly.

The palace is a complex of buildings in an eclectic mixture of architectural styles and periods: there are fortifications with turrets, slate-roofed roundhouses, and a lovely Victorian mansion. Some of the buildings are ruins, with caved-in roofs, struck by missiles in Afghanistan's recent wars. Karzai's residence is a graceless modernist concrete structure built in the sixties, for one of Afghanistan's former princes, with a small garden, a swimming pool, and a tennis court in back. I was shown into his sitting room, which had a homey but unintentionally retro look, with wood-veneer panelling on the walls. The furniture—upholstered in floral velour—was similar to what I had seen in middle-class Afghan homes.

When Karzai entered, he apologized for the delay—he had been asking Khalilzad if American helicopters could be sent to rescue victims of a flood. Karzai is a lithe man of medium height, with pale skin, a prominent nose, and large, expressive brown eyes. He has a salt-and-pepper beard clipped short, and a finely woven white wool *patou*, or man's shawl, was thrown loosely around his shoulders.

Although he is the leader of one of the most destitute countries on earth, Karzai has an uncanny, if dissonant, sense of sartorial panache. Westerners often assume that his elaborate outfits are the traditional dress of his people, the Pashtuns. In fact, Karzai assembles them as homages to Afghanistan's disparate ethnic groups—they are costumes, roughly akin to the baseball caps that an American politician might wear while campaigning in different parts of the country. The striped green silk *chapan* cape that Karzai wore to President Bush's State of the Union address in 2002 is Uzbek; the gray karakul hat he often wears is traditionally Tajik. When he is among other Pashtuns, he often wears a turban, as they do.



A few days before our meeting, I had watched Karzai speak at a ceremony in honor of International Women's Day, at the Hotel Intercontinental in Kabul. The event was the first public appearance by Karzai's wife, Zinat, who is thirty-five years old and was trained as an obstetrician and gynecologist. Like Karzai, Zinat is from the southern city of Kandahar and moved with her family to Quetta, Pakistan, during Afghanistan's civil war, where she worked with Afghan refugee women. Karzai, who is forty-seven, married her only six years ago; the marriage was an arranged one, and there is a great deal of speculation about their relationship. They do not have children. During her husband's address, Zinat, a pleasant-looking woman in a modest black chador, sat in the front row of the audience, along with other V.I.P.s. I asked Karzai whether security concerns had kept her from attending such events before, despite her role as First Lady.

"It was Women's Day," he said, smiling warily. "She wanted to go to the last Women's Day. But somehow it was messed up. Somebody came to me the day before, and said, 'Well, can she come?,' and I said yes and I meant to ask her." But, he said, "I forgot." He finally called to invite her just as he was leaving for the event. "She said, 'Get lost, too late,'" Karzai laughed. "This time, I remembered."

His own presence at the event was unusual; he rarely appears outside the palace, even in Kabul. He had arrived surrounded by two dozen heavily armed American guards. His security detail includes scores of American contractors working for DynCorp International, which has a multimillion-dollar contract with the State Department, and a smaller number of agents from the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Karzai told me that early in his Presidency Lieutenant General Dan McNeill, the first commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan, said to him, “Look, let's get you a security environment. You don't have any professionals here—anybody can get in and blow up this place.” He said that he resisted the offer, but then “I started to consult. Everybody, including the Chief Justice, you know what they said? They said, ‘Ring them as soon as possible, so that you can work independently, so that this place becomes independent.’ ” The Afghan people “know the means of this country,” Karzai said. “They know what we can do, what we can't do.”

In truth, most Afghans are far less sanguine. During the election campaign, Karzai was embarrassed when his American security men forced him to return to Kabul after a rocket was fired near his helicopter as it was about to land outside the town of Gardez. There are reasons for such caution; Karzai survived an assassination attempt in 2002, and three ministers in the interim government were murdered. But his opponents have used the fact of his U.S. protection to portray him as subservient, and to question his patriotism. Faheem Dashty, the editor of the *Kabul Weekly*, told me, “I don't understand why it is he cannot find Afghans to defend him. He's had three years in power now. If he had wanted to train Afghans, it's more than enough time. It can mean only that he doesn't trust Afghans.”

Despite his American support, Karzai has trouble convincing Afghans that he can confront the warlords or the thousands of Taliban fighters who are still at large. Karzai recently offered amnesty to the Taliban on the condition that they renounce violence. I asked Karzai about the offer, which many Afghans saw as a betrayal.

“Afghanistan had bad days before the Taliban as well,” Karzai replied. “From the time of the Soviets and from the time of the mujahideen groups—Afghanistan suffered for so many years. We have practically pardoned all those people who were among the murderers of the Afghan people. . . . Now either we have to bring people in to trial and seek justice or we have to forget about it, and live a life by forgetting the past.”

When I asked if there was a middle ground, he replied, “What is in the middle? If I go to the middle ground, I will not be bringing total peace to this country. If I can reduce the bomb blasts in Afghanistan by bringing some of the Taliban back home, and put things in order by making them behave all right, then I should do that. Now, if you ask me as a citizen of Afghanistan, ‘Karzai, what is it that you want, justice or peace?,’ I would say, of course, both—most human beings would. But, if you ask me as the President of Afghanistan, then I have to say, ‘Peace gives you continuation of life. Justice does not, necessarily.’ ” He added, “When we can afford it, we can have justice.”

“If you're being raptured, throw me your wallet.”

Karzai's relationship with the warlords is ambiguous: many of them fought against the Taliban as part of the Northern Alliance and, until recently, Karzai had little choice but to share power with them. (As an exile in Pakistan, he opposed the Taliban, but he was not a member of the Northern Alliance, which was dominated by Tajiks and Uzbeks.) When the United States military invaded Afghanistan, in October, 2001, it formed a tactical partnership with the Northern Alliance. The Alliance worked with American Special Forces and the C.I.A., and helped to direct air strikes. As the Taliban defenses in Kabul weakened, the U.S. asked the Northern Alliance to wait to enter the capital until a coalition government that would better reflect Afghanistan's ethnic mix could be formed. But the Northern Alliance took the capital anyway, and, from that position of strength, was able to demand the most powerful jobs in Karzai's cabinet. Mohammed Fahim, its military chief, became Karzai's Defense Minister and Vice-President, despite allegations that he is a major figure in Afghanistan's criminal underground. Last July, just before the Presidential campaign officially began, Karzai dropped him as his running mate. According to Americans I spoke to in Afghanistan, it was Ambassador Khalilzad who persuaded Karzai to make this move.

Meanwhile, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, perhaps Afghanistan's most notorious warlord, has been offered the post of chief of staff to the commander-in-chief of the armed forces—that is, Karzai. Dostum, an Uzbek who dominates a large swath of northern Afghanistan, is viewed by most human-rights organizations as among the worst war criminals in the country. One recent charge is that under his orders hundreds of Taliban fighters, who had surrendered to his forces, were locked in airless shipping containers and left to die of asphyxiation and thirst. Dostum is extremely wealthy, has a large and well-armed militia, and is reported to be heavily involved in narcotics trafficking. The American adviser to Karzai argued that the new job was mostly symbolic—"It's basically a broom closet down the hall"—and was the best way to reduce his power. But Dostum has not yet arrived in the capital, and many in Kabul question whether he will ever assume his post.

When I mentioned Dostum, Karzai offered a conflicted reply: "I am quite a sentimental person. I might be hurt a lot, when I see something hurt. And this is the only time where I sat down and said, 'Hamid, here you don't get sentimental—you think of this country's future, and provide an opportunity for all to work.' The countryside understands it very well. Afghans are extremely pragmatic." Before he made the appointment, he added, "I consulted extensively. I called all the former jihadi leaders, I called lots of other people, and then I made the appointment. I never do that without consultation. You know, I'm accused of too much consultation. That's my problem."

"What if we stow the 'Star Wars' crap for five seconds, Timmy, and get to the geometry?"

Hamid Karzai is the fourth of eight children born to Abdul Ahad Karzai, the former deputy speaker of Afghanistan's royal parliament and paramount chief of the Populzai tribe, and his wife, Durkho. The Karzais are connected by marriage to the former Afghan king Zahir Shah. (Although the monarchy was abolished in 1973, Karzai has declared Zahir Shah, who is ninety, the "father of the country" and allows him to live at the palace.) The family's ancestral home is in the village of Karz, in the parched flatlands just outside Kandahar.

Only two of Karzai's seven siblings live in Afghanistan. The eldest, Abdul Ahmed, is an engineer in Maryland. The next two, Qayum and Mahmoud, own a chain of Afghan restaurants—called Helmand, after Afghanistan's major river—in San Francisco, the Baltimore area, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Shawali, who is younger than Hamid, is involved in business ventures in Afghanistan, as is Ahmed Wali, who is also Hamid's personal representative in Kandahar. The seventh son is Abdul Wali, a biochemist at Stony Brook University, on Long Island. Fouzia, the only sister, lives in Maryland.

When I visited Kandahar in late March, Qayum, the second-eldest brother, was visiting from the United States. Qayum, who is a slightly fleshier version of Hamid, recounted how his father, who exemplified the old order—the so-called "feudals"—was arrested in a wave of Leninist terror after the Communist coup in 1978. He was jailed for two years. Upon his release, he left the country and went to Quetta, where most of the family had already fled. Hamid was studying in India, at Himachal Pradesh University. Once he completed his B.A. and M.A., in political science, he followed the family to Quetta. There he joined the Afghan National Liberation Front, one of the more moderate of the mujahideen factions then fighting the Soviets. Hamid was fluent in six languages—English, French, Hindi, and Urdu, as well as Dari and Pashto, Afghanistan's two official languages—and he became the spokesman for the front. (Hamid told me that he occasionally crossed the border to visit mujahideen on the battlefield, and that he had carried a weapon but had never used it.)

Qayum offered to show me the family's village, Karz. We drove in a Toyota Land Cruiser for twenty minutes or so on a rutted dirt track between fields of grapes, which are harvested for raisins, not wine. Qayum told the driver to stop next to a large family cemetery. The tomb of Abdul Ahad Karzai dominated the cemetery, a raised plinth under a canopied roof.

In 1999, Abdul Ahad Karzai was gunned down outside his home in Quetta, presumably by the Taliban. Hamid Karzai and his siblings, together with hundreds of other relatives and tribespeople, defied the Taliban by bringing his body across the border in a vast convoy. They drove a hundred and twenty miles to Kandahar, and then to Karz, for the burial ceremony. "It was a show of force—it was very audacious," Qayum said. "People said that it was the greatest number of cars ever assembled in Kandahar—or not since the kings used to come. At one count, there were four hundred cars in the procession." Afterward, Hamid was proclaimed head of the Populzai tribe.

Karz is a poor, featureless place, a sunstruck maze of flat-roofed mud dwellings and walls. Qayum pointed out a building that had been the primary school he attended as a boy. The Karzais had had some vineyards but were not one of the great landowning families of Kandahar, Qayum said. Indicating a tiny mud-walled shop, he said, "I used to think that was a huge supermarket." The family moved to Kabul in 1965, when his father became a member of parliament. He was in ninth grade and Hamid was seven years old.

We walked to the collapsed mud walls of what had been the Karzais' home. A displaced family was living in a tent pitched in the middle of the courtyard. Qayum said that when they were growing up he thought Hamid might pursue some sort of humanitarian work. "He always had an enormously soft heart," Qayum said. "Beggars used to come to our house and ask for Hamid." In 2000, he said, "Hamid was visiting us in the U.S. and watching TV, and there was an appeal from Save the Children or one of those international humanitarian organizations, and there was a picture of an Afghan girl sitting there, surrounded by garbage, and he became highly emotional—unbelievable! Tears came to his eyes. He said, 'Can you please turn this off?' He just couldn't handle it." Qayum added, "I never thought that he would become a politician."

In late 2001, Qayum was in Bonn, at the conference where the post-Taliban leadership was being negotiated. He recalled telephoning Hamid, who was in Afghanistan, to inform him that there was a movement to nominate him for President. Hamid Karzai had qualities that made him an ideal compromise candidate: he was a moderate but safely traditionalist Pashtun from a well-known patrician family. He was also favored by King Zahir Shah. Qayum told him, "This is the toughest moment in Afghan history. Are you sure you want to do this?" Hamid replied, "If not me, then who is going to do it?"

Every other day or so, Karzai holds an audience in Gul Khana, or Flower House, the part of the royal palace where he has his office. One afternoon this spring, he received a delegation from Badakhshan, the northeasternmost province of Afghanistan. I joined the visitors—some wearing loose-fitting shalwar kameez and felt *pakul* hats, others in military uniforms or Western suits—as they were shown to a long row of tables. A couple of Afghan cameramen stood behind a tripod with a video camera, and Afghan and American armed guards took up positions around the room.

After a few minutes, Karzai entered, and hailed the visitors enthusiastically. He was wearing an elegant blue overcoat and a karakul hat. Everyone fell silent for an opening prayer, and then one of the Badakhshanis stood up to speak.

He began by praising Karzai, who was, he said, a great man, a good man. He reminded Karzai that Badakhshanis had always been loyal to the kings of Afghanistan. And they were loyal to Karzai. But lawlessness and warlordism defined daily life in Badakhshan. "People are beginning to tell us that we shouldn't have voted for you, because you cannot defend us." He said that those who supported Karzai needed something in return.

Karzai said sympathetically, "It will happen, it will happen."

The next speaker said that he had been Karzai's local chairman during the Presidential campaign last fall, then he said, "Lately, people have been coming up to me and saying, 'You haven't fulfilled your promises.'" He told Karzai that the solution was to give his people jobs. At that, Karzai called for the video camera to be turned off—"so that we can talk freely."

Another man, a member of Afghanistan's small Ismaili Shiite sect, took the microphone. "Our province is controlled by smugglers, and we have seven districts where we have no local people at all in the official posts," he said. "Everywhere we go, they say, 'You are not Tajik or Hazara; you're not Uzbek or Pashtun. There is no job for you.' "

Karzai looked displeased. "What are you saying? That if you're not from a certain tribe you don't get a job?"

"Yes," replied the man. "Especially in the National Army."

"This is wrong. Everyone in Afghanistan, each tribe, has the same rights, and this is promised in the constitution. What are these people thinking? I prefer an orphan, a child without a father, or, even better, someone who doesn't know what nationality he is than such people!"

Karzai told an aide to get the Interior Minister on the telephone. When the aide handed him his cell phone, Karzai told the minister what he had heard: "These are educated people telling me these things, and I want to discuss this with you. When can you see me?" Karzai then had a call placed to his Army chief, Bismillah Khan. After a brief exchange, he turned to the men in the room and said, "Bismillah Khan says he has space open for officers and soldiers and you should send him your candidates." Everyone applauded.

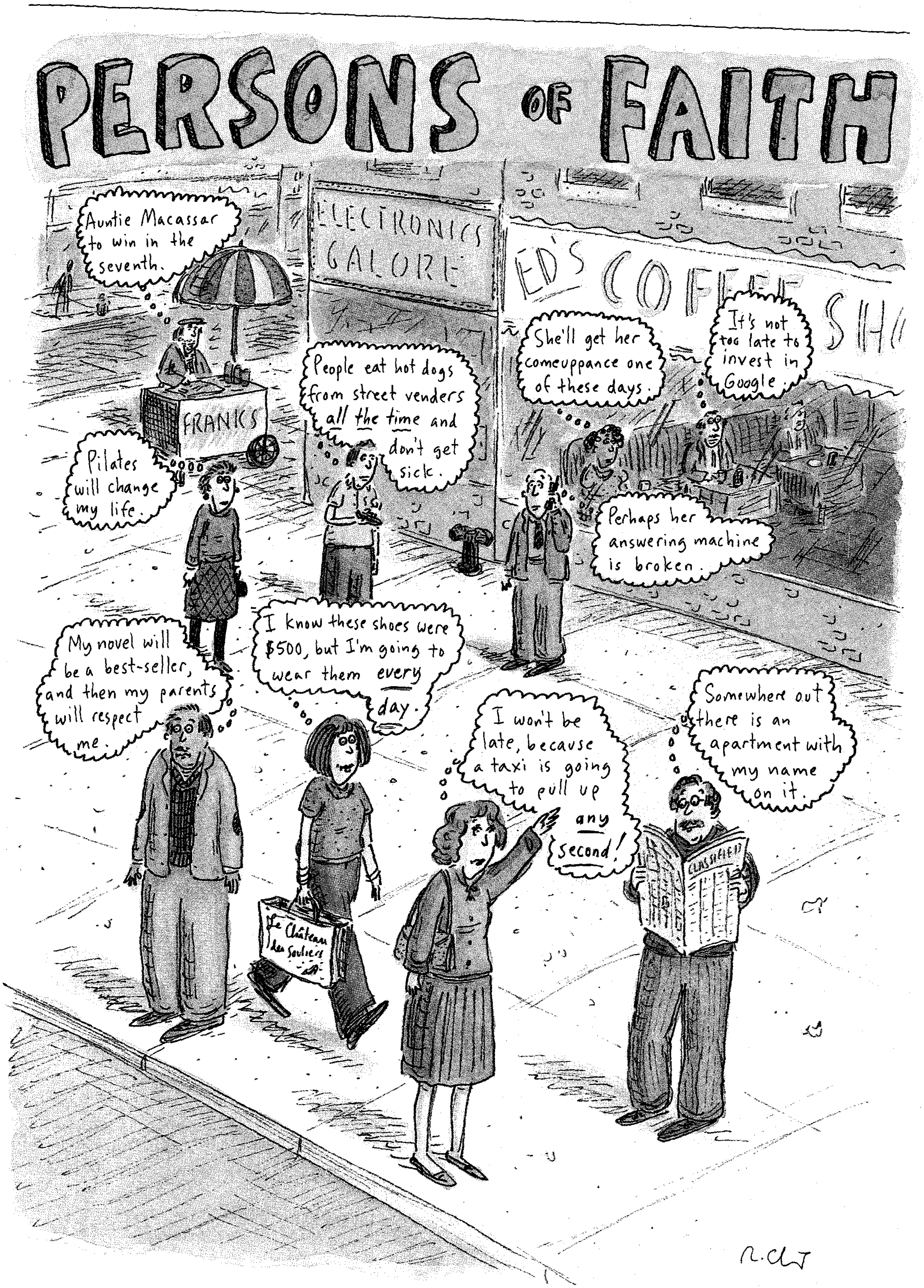
The lights in the chandeliers that hung from the domed ceiling of the meeting room flickered on and off—presumably as a result of one of the city's frequent power shortages. Karzai noticed a Mongol-looking elderly man who had stood up, and urged him forward. The man had been sitting quietly with several companions, all of them wearing high tasselled fur hats and long black leather boots with their trousers tucked in, Cossack style.

The old man introduced himself as Abdul Rashid, the khan of the Small Pamir, a region at the far end of the Wakhan Corridor, a slender neck of mountainous land—the most inaccessible corner of Badakhshan. The Wakhan borders Tajikistan on the north and Pakistan on the south, and juts into western China. (The khan's people are ethnic Kirghiz.) The khan had a wispy beard and thick glasses, and spoke in a reedy, tremulous voice. He said that he and his companions had waited three months to see Karzai, and it had taken them four weeks to reach the capital from their village; they had made much of the journey on foot.

"There are no roads where I live," the khan explained. "I am thinking that the Afghan government has forgotten us." There were no schools or hospitals, or policemen to guard the frontier against smugglers or terrorists. After several years of drought, his people had little food. He was ashamed to say it, but they were also afflicted by opium addiction, and needed clinics.

Karzai interrupted him. "Don't worry. I am going to arrange food—I will send you back with food on helicopters," he said. "You will not go home without a solution to your problems. We will arrange what documentation is needed for the clinics, and we will get you your food."

The other Pamiris rose to their feet and walked toward Karzai. One of them produced an embroidered robe and a high peaked cap of many colors, similar to the caps worn by Tibetan lamas. Karzai put on the robe and the fantastic hat, placed his own karakul on the khan's head, and beamed at the men. The video camera was back on now, and the room had an air of celebration. Suddenly, a man dressed in military fatigues took the microphone and called out, "Our province is controlled by mafias and drug traffickers!," but Karzai cut him off, say-


PERSONS OF FAITH
ELECTRONICS GALORE
ED'S COFFEE SH
FRANKS
Auntie Macassar to win in the seventh.
People eat hot dogs from street venders all the time and don't get sick.
She'll get her comeuppance one of these days.
It's not too late to invest in Google.
Pilates will change my life.
Perhaps her answering machine is broken.
My novel will be a best-seller, and then my parents will respect me.
I know these shoes were $500, but I'm going to wear them every day.
I won't be late, because a taxi is going to pull up any second!
Somewhere out there is an apartment with my name on it.
Le Château des Souliers
CLASSIFIED

"It's O.K., kids—your mother's just having an argument."

ing, "We will solve it." Surrounded by his security men, he headed for the door, leaving his visitors behind.

Karzai has not been to Karz, his home village, for years. "The last time I saw it was when it was bombed by the Soviets, in 1988," he said. Six months later, the Soviets pulled out, but the fight against their Afghan proxies continued for three years. Finally, in 1992, Najibullah, the last Afghan Communist ruler, abandoned his office, and the mujahideen returned from their base in Pakistan. "We all came together," Karzai recalled. "We spent the night at the edge of the city, and the next morning we all came to Kabul."

As they drove into the city, Karzai said, his elation gave way to foreboding. "I noticed people looking from behind their drawn curtains. We heard a lot of firing in the air. By the second day, it appeared that the city was in the hands of too many different groups, that our lives were going to become more difficult."

Almost immediately, factional fighting broke out. Karzai eventually became the deputy foreign minister in the transitional mujahideen government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Massoud, his charismatic military chief, who later commanded the Northern Alliance. In a series of shifting battlefield alliances, Dostum, who had been with the Soviets, joined forces first with Rabbani and Massoud and then with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a radical Islamist. Thousands of civilians were killed, and large sections of Kabul, which until then had remained intact, were levelled.

During the fighting, Karzai fled. I had heard many tales about what happened to him. There were reports that he had been imprisoned and mistreated, or even tortured, and then had escaped. Karzai's rivals made disparaging jokes and suggested that he was a coward. I asked him to clarify what had happened.

Karzai coughed, as if uncomfortable, but began talking. "It was at the height of this extremely bad period for Afghanistan," he said. One day, when he was at the Foreign Ministry, one of Rabbani's men came and told him that the President wanted to see him. Karzai was suspicious, but he went along. The man drove Karzai to the office of the intelligence services and led him into a small, dirty room with a bare radiator. Muhammad Aref, who later served as the head of Karzai's own intelligence services, came in. ("I have never mentioned it to him," Karzai said.) Aref and the other man began to interrogate Karzai, asking about alliances against Rabbani. "I said, 'I know nothing of this.' They were very, very nervous, almost pale with nervousness! Just as they asked me the second question, a big bang was heard, and the room filled with smoke and debris from glass and all that, and everybody ran out, and I also ran out. I saw that the roof was not there. I saw that sunshine was coming in."

A rocket had hit the building. In the confusion that followed, Karzai made his way outside, and back to his office. "That's it. I came to the Foreign Ministry, and the people there were shocked—I was bleeding, I had some shrapnel."

Karzai hired a taxi and began a circuitous trip, by car and on foot, until he was safely in Pakistan. He said that Rabbani later telephoned him and his father to apologize, saying that he hadn't known about the interrogation beforehand. But Karzai did not go back. The people around the President, he realized, had succumbed to paranoia. The next time Karzai returned to Kabul, it was as Afghanistan's President.

During the next few years of civil war, the United States saw the relatively unknown Taliban as potential peacemakers—and so, for a time, did Karzai, who knew many of the Taliban commanders from his years in the anti-Soviet jihad. Early on, he gave them money and weapons, in the belief that they would be the vehicle for what was then his dream—the restoration of the Pashtun monarchy of King Zahir Shah. In 1996, the Taliban seized power, and invited Karzai to become their U.N. Ambassador. He considered the idea, but decided against it.

"A lot of the jihad commanders in the field were very pragmatic people," Karzai said. "Just some were very radical." By radicals, he meant "puritanical—not politicized radical types," he said. "They were very clean people. Almost all of them became the Taliban." He added, "When the Taliban movement began, we saw it as an innocent movement. When I say 'we,' I mean we Afghans, a lot of us, me, my friends, many other members of this community. We thought they were people who wanted to help this country. But very soon we recognized that among them there were people who were not from Afghanistan, and who were horribly cruel to this place—Al Qaeda."

After his father's assassination, Karzai tried to get U.S. support for a Pashtun anti-Taliban movement. In 1999, he went to see Michael Sheehan, a counter-terrorism official in both the George H. W. Bush and Clinton Administrations. Sheehan told me, "At the time, Karzai was just a nobody, another Afghan exile—I never imagined he'd become the President. But I had heard he was prominent with the Pashtuns." When they met, Sheehan said, "he seemed decent. He seemed like a nice guy, but I remember sitting there looking at him and wondering, How is *he* going to go after the Taliban?" Karzai talked about his plans, Sheehan said, and "we agreed on everything, about how evil the Taliban were, and the need to remove them. But what could I do for him? In terms of the Clinton Administration's policy at the time, there wasn't a lot of stomach for it." That indifference continued into the Bush Administration, Sheehan said, especially since the Northern Alliance was losing ground. "There were a few guys in the C.I.A. pushing for the Northern Alliance, but nobody else wanted to touch it," Sheehan said. "Afghanistan was seen as a loser, a sinkhole. Until 9/11, no one gave a shit."

Karzai testified before the Senate in 2000, and also began to coördinate his efforts with Massoud, the military leader of the Northern Alliance. Then, on September 9, 2001, Massoud was assassinated by Al Qaeda suicide bombers. Two days later, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked.

When Karzai saw the first news reports, he said, "I knew immediately that the United States was going to come and help us." Within two days, "hundreds of people arrived in Quetta to meet with me," Karzai said. "The house became so crowded!" Among them was Khalilzad, who then worked for Condoleezza Rice, the national-security adviser. (During the Clinton Administration, Khalilzad worked for the Rand Corporation and was a consultant for Unocal, a company that wanted to build a pipeline through Afghanistan.) Three weeks later, in early October, 2001, "I moved into Afghanistan," Karzai said excitedly. "Without any help, at that moment—nothing. I just walked into the country."

Karzai and a few companions made their way to Tirin Kot, the main town in the rugged province of Oruzgan, north of Kandahar, and then on to a small village crisscrossed by running streams. He met with tribal elders, he said, "and that's where I learned the significance of the United States to Afghanistan."

The elders were skeptical of Karzai. "A cleric said, 'Look, we know what you're up to, we know that you want to defeat the Taliban, but do you have the backing of the U.S.? Will it give you planes, will it give you weapons, will it give you money, will it help you?' And I said yes." The cleric asked if Karzai had a satellite phone, and when he said yes told him, "All right, then, call the U.S.—ask them to come and bomb a place near the Taliban governor's office, or the police headquarters in Tirin Kot. The next day, the people will go and take the town, without too much trouble."

Karzai said he told the cleric that he couldn't ask the U.S. to bomb his own country. The cleric pressed him. "He said, 'Well, I'm sorry, this means that you are not interested in freeing the country—you're only here to kill yourself and us, and our children and women, and we're not going to die in a futile war of yours.' "

Karzai stayed in the village for eleven days. The tribal council met and argued with him, telling him that Al Qaeda fighters were coming, and would attack. Finally, they said that the entire village was fleeing into the mountains for safety. "I was afraid there would be a massacre," Karzai said. He decided to make the call.

"When I called the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, I said, 'I am Hamid Karzai.' To my surprise, they knew who I was. I thought they had forgotten about me!

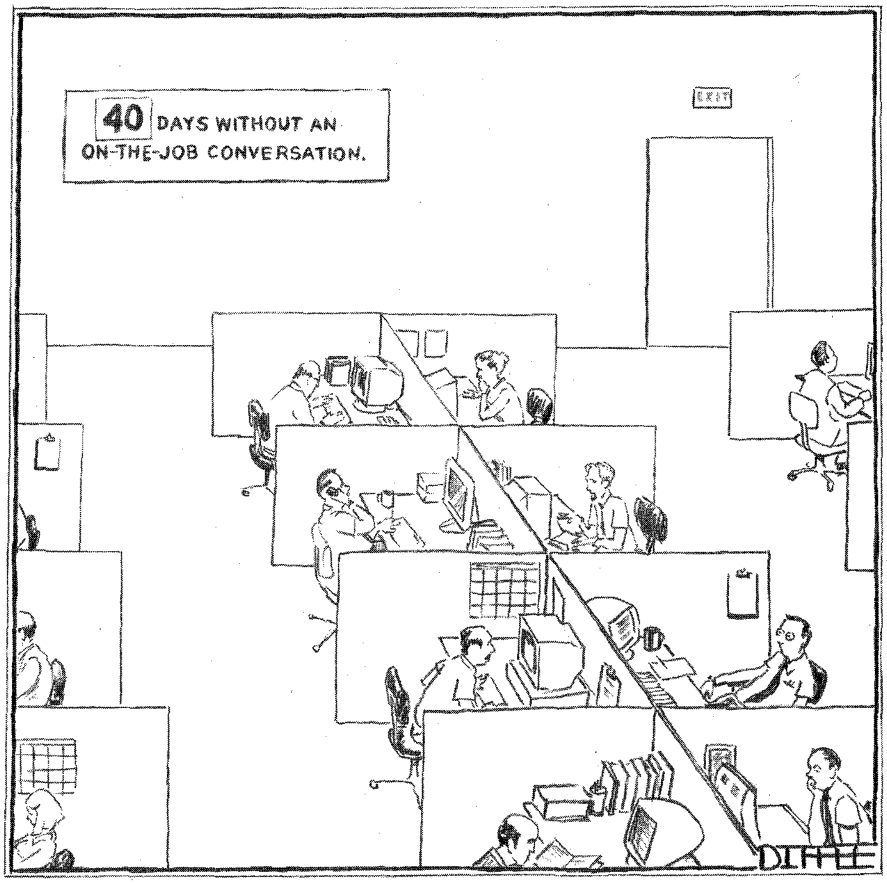
"They said, 'Where the hell are you?'

"I said, 'I am here in Oruzgan.'

"They said, 'Do you have communications, how do we locate you? Do you have'—what is it called? G.T.S., G.P.S.? I didn't even know what G.P.S. was. I said, 'I have no idea. I know I am between Tirin Kot and the mountains.' They said, 'Fine.' "

The Americans told Karzai to have his men light four fires on the hills around their position, at least a hundred metres apart, for the next two nights. They complied, and when Karzai called again the Americans told him, "We've found you." Karzai paused and smiled broadly, and said, "Technology."

The Americans told Karzai to set the

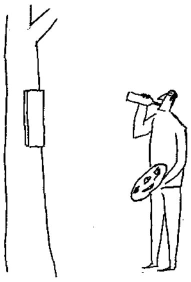

40 DAYS WITHOUT AN ON-THE-JOB CONVERSATION.
EXIT
DIFFEE

fires again, so that they could drop a shipment of weapons. ("Hey, great story," Karzai said to me, "if someone can make a movie out of it.") He and the tribesmen lit the fires and waited. Hours passed, but the planes didn't come. Karzai went to sleep in a shepherd's hut. Then, at about one-thirty in the morning, he said, "someone came, saying, 'Do you hear the planes?' Just as I came out, a huge black plane flew over us, and then somebody shouted, 'Oh, look at those white things!' " The white things were parachutes, and they were attached to crates of weapons.

"And, by the way, the people had already taken Tirin Kot," Karzai continued. "Exactly what that man had asked me—while we were in the mountains, the U.S. planes had come and bombed some place in Tirin Kot. The next morning, a group of about fifty tribal chiefs went into the town, kicked the governor out of the place, kicked the police out of the place, and took control of the town."

It was in Tirin Kot, two days later, that Karzai realized the tide had finally gone against the Taliban and in his favor. A defecting Taliban commander arrived there alone, and asked him for a letter of safe conduct. Karzai decided to write the letter, to see what would happen. Two days later, the man returned with pickup trucks and weapons for Karzai. "Then I said, 'Wow, we are much wider and much more than we imagined.' "

After the audience at the palace, I went to see the Pamiris at their lodgings, which they had described uncertainly as a "Presidential guesthouse." This turned out to be a decrepit two-story building on a dirt lane off a back street. The grounds were strewn with litter. The room where the Pamiris were living was dark and cold; there was no electricity. The khan, a reserved, dignified man, said that he had decided to come to the capital nearly four months earlier, right after Karzai's election victory. "Before, there was always war in our country, so we didn't want to come down," he said. "But now a great power has come to Afghanistan." He meant the United States. "We came to congratulate Mr. Karzai for this and to ask him for his help."



They left their homes before the winter snows blocked the mountain passes, and walked for seventeen days before reaching Wakhan, the nearest town with a dirt road. None of the men had been in touch with their families for months. "Where we live, there is not even a telephone," the khan said. "We keep sheep and yaks and we live from their milk and cheese for seven months of the year, and our people make carpets from the animals' wool. Afterward, we take the carpets on foot to the market at Wakhan."

Their visits to Wakhan had exposed them to the drug trade. "We have opium addicts in every family," the khan said. He estimated that one in four Pamiris was an addict, women as well as men. His own son-in-law, he said, "smokes for three days and then sleeps for three days."

The Pamiris told me that their audience with Karzai had been arranged by General Fazal-Azim Mojadeddi, known as Zalmay Khan, who was born in a less remote part of Badakhshan. After my meeting with the Pamiris, Zalmay Khan invited me to his office, in the palace complex. He is a tall, burly, impeccably dressed man; according to his business card, he is in charge of "V.I.P. security" for the Presidency. When I asked him why the Pamiris had come to him, he said, "They don't know anyone else."

Zalmay Khan told me that he had come across the Pamiris when he was in the mountains as a mujahideen in Massoud's army, in the early nineties. He stayed with them for three weeks. "It was August, and even then it was really cold," he said. "The Pamiris live remote from one another—families are two and three kilometres apart. I asked why the population was so small and not increasing, and they told me it was because eighty per cent of their babies died before tasting their mother's milk. They have no doctors to guide them, no health care." As for their opium use, "They were a sad people, and this was a way for them to escape their problems."

The Pamiris remembered Zalmay Khan, and when they heard on the radio that he had joined Karzai's government, they decided to seek him out. Zalmay Khan told me that, under the Afghan monarchy, his father had been the member of parliament for the region, and the Pamiris seemed to have tapped some dormant sense of feudal responsibility in him. ("They look to me," he said.)

During the interim administration, President Karzai had given orders regarding the Pamiris to several of his ministers, "but they didn't take him seriously," Zalmay Khan said. This time, he believed, the insecurity of the region's border, which was used as a crossing point by Al Qaeda and Uzbek terrorists, meant that the government could not afford its traditional neglect.

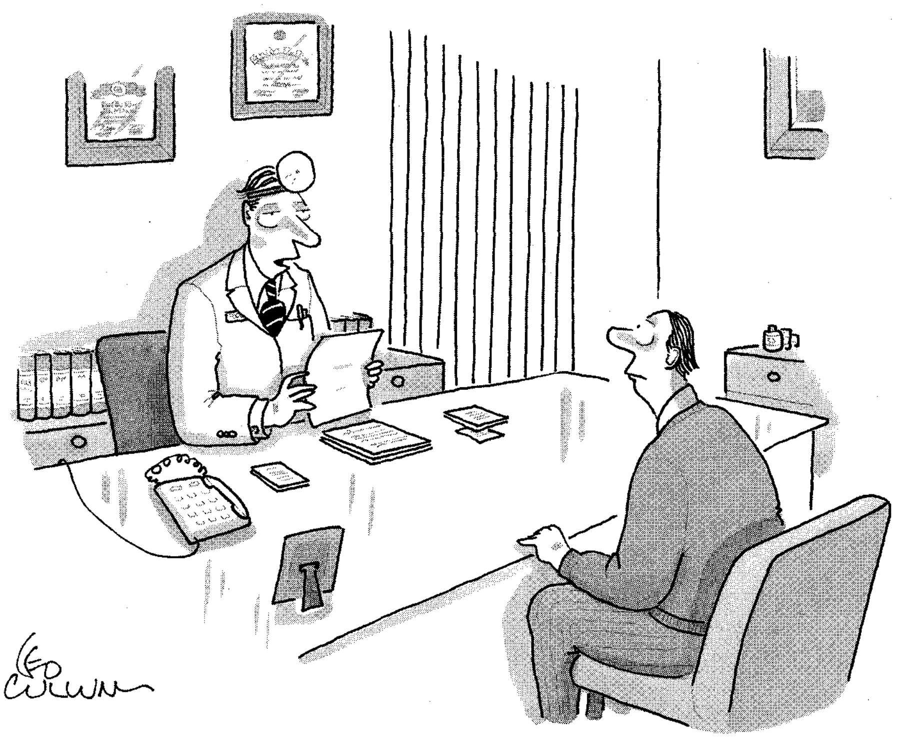
The next time I saw Karzai, we talked about the Pamiris. When I mentioned that they had waited three months to see him, he looked shocked. "Nobody told me," he said defensively. "Now I must find out if all the arrangements for the things they were asking for were made or not." Karzai looked over at his aides, and said something briskly in Pashtun. One of them began scribbling on a notepad. Karzai looked back at me, and made it clear that he was ready to move on. When the conversation turned to the extremes of Afghanistan's topography, he looked relieved.

The town of Charikar, north of Kabul, where the Shamali Plains meet the foothills of the Hindu Kush, is the gateway to the Panjshir Valley. The area was the home base of Ahmed Shah Massoud and other Tajiks in the Northern Alliance. In the election, Karzai's share of the vote in the Panjshir was around one per cent. Afterward, Tajiks angrily accused him of having "Pashtunized" his administration by removing Northern Alliance men from their government jobs. These days, the Panjshir is something like enemy territory for Karzai. I went along on a visit he made to Charikar in March, for a road opening, and we were flown in on two American Chinook helicopters, escorted by two Apaches, two Black Hawks, and two fighter jets, which circled overhead once we landed. In the hour we were on the ground—just long enough for Karzai to dump a ceremonial load of dirt—dozens of American and Afghan guards stood by.

A few days earlier, I had been invited to dinner in Charikar at the house of Atta, a local strongman who was a former mujahideen commander. The entertainment was provided by a *maskhara*, or traditional Afghan jester, named Samad Pashean. Long before the recent decades of warfare, *maskhara* performed for the country's monarchs; as in medieval Europe, they had license to lampoon the powerful. Pashean was one of the last remaining *maskhara*. He had survived the Soviet occupation, the civil war, and the Taliban years by wandering from one warlord's base to another, plying his services. According to my host, he was also a hit man, a blackmailer, and a thief.

Pashean regaled us with skits, dances, and gossipy monologues. In one, he described how after a man insulted him he went to his house, killed him, and stole his shoes—for some reason, everyone laughed uproariously at that detail. Pointing to me, Pashean offered to kill anyone I wanted for the equivalent of two thousand American dollars. When I told him that his price was absurdly high, he good-naturedly indicated that he was ready to bargain.

Much of the humor was directed at Karzai, and it was not kind. Karzai was compared to a mountain dog who went hunting by himself, only to lose his way home in the snow. One of my dinner companions interpreted, "Karzai has been away, and with the Americans for so long, he has forgotten what Afghanistan is like." (Not everything was political. There was also a pair of skits about brides on their wedding nights which the *maskhara* performed in partial burka drag. It was tame, by Western standards, but the mujahideen fighters practically wept with laughter.) Another riff involved militiamen taking part in a demobilization program but turning in only defective weapons. "We Afghans have to learn how to eat for ourselves, like cows, who, with their cuds, know how to find the good stuff to eat, and how to spit out the bad," the *maskhara* concluded. "One day, we Afghans will be able to spit out Karzai."



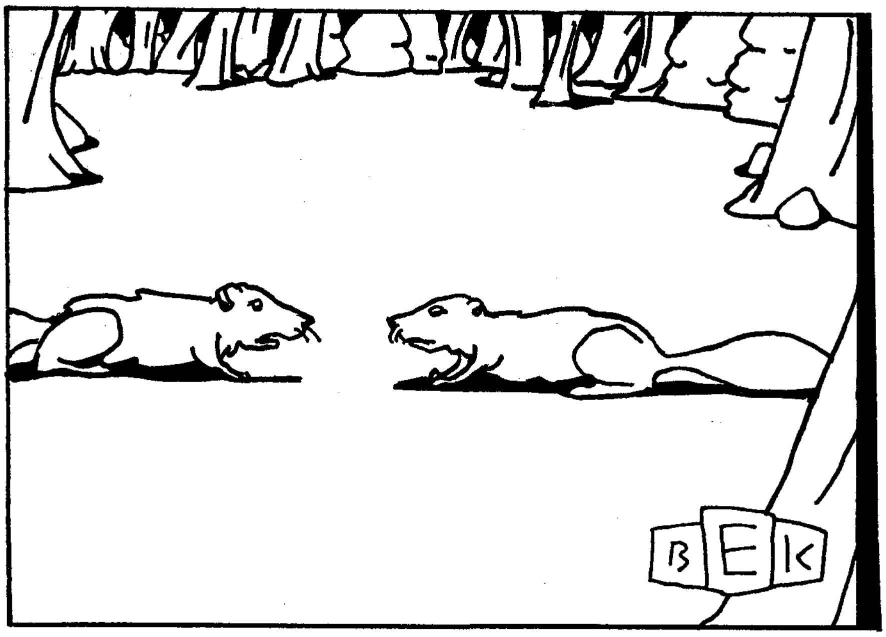
"You're fifty-seven years old. I'd like to get that down a bit."

Ismail Khan was a test case in Karzai's effort to reduce the power of the warlords. It was Khan who, in 1978, sparked the jihad against Afghanistan's Soviet-backed regime by leading an Army revolt in his native city, Herat. He was a legendary battlefield commander against the Soviets and, later, the Taliban. After the overthrow of the Taliban, in 2001, Khan became the undisputed warlord of the city and the surrounding province of Herat, which borders Iran. He imposed strict Islamist discipline and kept the customs duties that were collected at the border crossings, instead of sending them to Kabul. He used much of the money to develop his city, and, before long, he was being referred to as the Emir of Herat. Khan is not as gratuitously brutal as Dostum, or as personally corrupt as some of the other warlords. But his defiance of central authority and his close relationship with Iran were a source of growing anxiety and embarrassment to Karzai and to the Americans.

Last year, during extended fighting in Herat involving several different militias—some were believed to have been acting on Karzai's behalf—Ismail Khan's son was killed, and his men went on a retaliatory rampage. At a critical moment, Karzai left Afghanistan to accept an award in Europe, and Ambassador Khalilzad flew to Herat. Shortly afterward, Khalilzad went on television to announce that Khan had agreed to leave Herat and join Karzai's government. In December, Khan became the Minister of Energy. It was a stunning turn of events, one that increased Karzai's authority, even if it had less to do with his strength than with that of the Americans who stood behind him.

An American diplomat in Kabul told me, "The institutions of the country are still very weak, and so the fact that the U.S. enjoys a lot of credibility here was a factor." He added, "The shadow use of force can have a powerful effect on crushing the actual use of force. We had to make sure we signalled to Ismail Khan and others that the U.S. supported the President and his decisions but that we also saw a way forward for Khan. Finding roles that are dignified—and also more suited to the new circumstances—are always an important part of these solutions."

Ismail Khan is a stocky, powerfully built man, with hard eyes and a long, flowing snow-white beard. Upon greeting him, his aides and followers kiss his hand. I visited Khan at his ministry, in a district of western Kabul that was heavily damaged in the civil war. "You know us as heroes of the jihad, but now we are known by the new title—'warlords,'" he said, smiling bitterly. "During the Soviet times, we were there in the fighting, feeling the fire and smoke of the war, and everyone was awaiting the outcome, wanting us to beat them. Those who call us warlords now were sitting in their air-conditioned homes. I wish they'd spent



"I've been with a lot of gentle woodland creatures who turned out to be real sickies."

a night with us at the front line in the war. But I know that these things are being said and done for politics or for the benefit of someone." Khan gave me a significant look, and, as he went on, it became clear that he was referring to the United States.

Relaxing a little, Khan said, "If you go to Herat, you will see the good job I did there." He had built new roads, provided water and electricity, and opened schools—"for both boys and girls. There are fifty-four thousand girl students in Herat." Khan boasted that, in the short time he had been in his new job, "I've raised the electricity in Kabul from fifty-five to a hundred megawatts"—in contrast, he suggested, to the rest of the government, which after three years had been unable to restore basic services.

We talked for a while about the obstacles facing the government. He paused, and then blurted out, "The thing is power. Power is necessary to build, to do what I did in Herat."

I asked whether Karzai had power, and Khan answered by speaking again about Herat. "The projects that I started are still unfinished, and now there is insecurity, too. When I was there, women could walk in the city with their children at night. Now you don't see people out on the streets at night. In all this time, the government there has been at the service of President Karzai."

Khan went on, "I am very depressed. I was injured three times. There are fourteen bullets in my body, and eleven members of my family have been killed. I saw forty-nine thousand people killed in Herat. In one day alone, during the fight with the Communists, twenty thousand people were killed"—Khan was referring to a vicious aerial bombardment of Herat, in March, 1979, carried out in reprisal for the slaughter of Soviet advisers and their families by his forces. "It is only random luck that I am still here. So when it was all over I wanted to rebuild my city. I managed to do some. But since I left it's all becoming undone."

Yunis Qanouni, the Tajik politician who came in a distant second in the Presidential election, told me, "The removal of warlordism is fine; it should be done. But people also want democracy, stability, confidence, balanced reconstruction, and economic expansion. The government does not have a proper national strategy. If you ask what is the national strategy, no one can tell you. One day, Ismail Khan is a warlord, and the next he isn't. It is the same with General Dostum."

We were sitting in Qanouni's living room. He lives in an imposing, well-guarded house in Kabul's northern suburbs decorated in an expensive, faux-Georgian style. Wearing a superbly tailored pin-striped suit, Qanouni seemed to have done very well since the fall of the Taliban.

"The problem as I see it is that the leadership is weak," he said. "No government in Afghanistan's history has had the international support this government has had. Karzai has been unable to take advantage of these opportunities. But maybe another person could." Qanouni added, "These next five years will just be a transitional period."

The drug trade, which has strengthened the warlords and corrupted Afghan officials, is in the background of any discussion of Karzai's administration. The sheer number of people who make their living from opium and heroin has made it politically difficult for Karzai to act. On this issue, he has not had the full backing of the United States. Until recently, the Pentagon kept American troops from taking part directly in counter-narcotics efforts, which were left mostly to the British and the Europeans. Nearly eight hundred million dollars has been budgeted for counter-narcotics, but an American official in Kabul admitted that the U.S. was at a loss about how to solve the problem. Karzai has vehemently objected to one approach, the aerial spraying of poppy fields, because of its effect on farmers—a stand that seems to have irritated Washington. Last year, Karzai declared a "jihad" on the drug trade, and he has issued moral, religious, and nationalist appeals to his countrymen to stop growing poppies. He speaks wistfully of farmers returning to traditional crops, like pomegranates and honeydew melons. In the absence of a robust plan for combatting the traffickers, it's the sort of sentiment that makes him look like a well-intentioned man but a powerless leader.

A top Afghan intelligence official told me, "What I worry about is Afghanistan becoming like Russia in the mid-nineties." He was referring to the proliferation of gangster capitalism following the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are some signs that it is already happening. Even in the capital, warlords, strongmen, and corrupt officials are carrying out land grabs with a kind of Wild

West impunity. The same tactics used for so many years in Afghanistan's wars seem to have been redeployed to accumulate wealth.

In late 2003, the residents of a shantytown at the edge of Kabul's most affluent district were forcibly removed, and their homes were bulldozed by police officers under the command of Kabul's police chief. An inquiry by a U.N. official revealed that the land had been divided into lots for mansions and allocated to more than three hundred government officials, including twenty-eight of Karzai's cabinet ministers. Fahim and Qanouni were among the beneficiaries. Karzai fired the police chief, but perhaps it was one battle that he decided not to fight, or perhaps he simply forgot about it, because the police chief was given a new senior security job, and the building of the mansions commenced.

Because Karzai is distracted by a host of issues, it is hard for him to keep smaller promises, too. The day before I left Afghanistan, I went to see the Pamiris again. Their mood was ebullient. On their first visit to the Health Ministry, they had practically been laughed out of the building, but now they had once more been promised their clinics. And the rural-development minister had told them that, while there wasn't much chance of a helicopter, he was organizing trucks with food and blankets for three hundred families, and some shoes. When I called for an update last week, however, not much more had happened. Zalmay Khan was out of the country, and his assistant reported that, as far as he knew, the Pamiris had returned to the Wakhan Corridor empty-handed.

Hamid Karzai is not a warlord, as most Afghan politicians of the past three decades have been, and this is both the source of his credibility as a democrat and his great vulnerability—he needs the American military in order to have bargaining power. To a very real degree, Karzai is less a conventional President than something akin to a constitutional monarch. His lack of power has rendered him the public face of an administration that, despite the tension in recent weeks, effectively remains an extension of the U.S. government.

Zalmay Khalilzad's departure for Iraq will present a test for Karzai: whether the President can function as a leader without the Ambassador at his side. (Last week, the Administration named Ronald Neumann, a diplomat based in Iraq, to replace Khalilzad.) Karzai still must find a way to balance his conciliatory instincts—the qualities that make him genuinely likable—with the need to be tough enough to confront warlords and drug traffickers and to make Afghanistan truly independent of the U.S.

As long as the balance of power remains in American hands, Karzai will appear weak to his enemies, many of whom feel that they earned on the battlefield their right to power, and who would not hesitate to use force to unseat him. In this light, President Bush's unwillingness to cede to Karzai's request for a face-saving role in the U.S. military operations seems shortsighted. Barnett Rubin, a scholar of Afghan affairs at New York University, told me, "Karzai is the most pro-American leader you can ask for in the Muslim world—that is, he's trying to be a leader. But the Bush Administration certainly isn't helping him."

In my last interview with Karzai, he told me that he had been in Tirin Kot on December 5, 2001, when he learned that he would become Afghanistan's President. "I was headed up to the top of the hill, because I was feeling very, very cold, and I said I will go up there and get warm. Just as I moved up, a bomb landed; the windows and the doors and everything collapsed on us, and it hit in exactly the same spot as where I was intending to go." Karzai laughed, and said, shaking his head, "God is great."

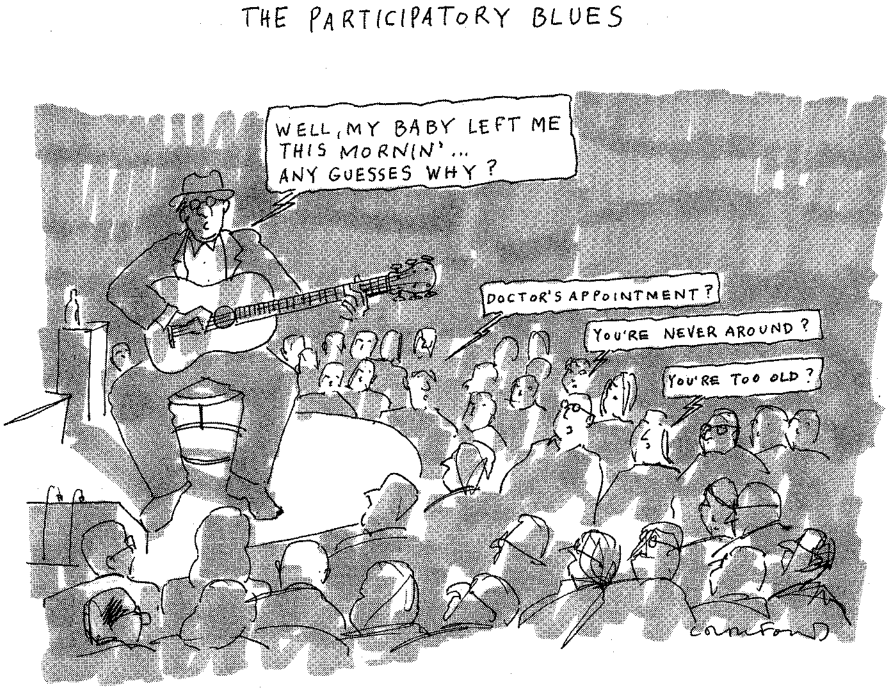
The bomb, an errant American missile, wounded Karzai and killed eight other people. "Nurses were cleaning my face of the debris, the blood," Karzai said. "A call came, and when I answered it was Lyse Doucet, of the BBC, with news from Bonn. She said, 'You have been selected to lead the government.' So—that is the day the Taliban also came to surrender. Nine, nine-twenty, the call about Bonn. Ten o'clock, ten-fifteen, the Taliban came to surrender. One hour."

But then I asked Karzai when he had really felt the power of the Presidency, and he replied, "I don't know, I don't know. I still don't feel the difference, I still feel the same as if I were moving along, organizing meetings against the Taliban, or as if I were still in Tirin Kot. There's no change. I don't feel like the President or anything else—I don't care about the Presidency or being President—I dislike power, I really dislike it. I mean, it doesn't exist for me, I don't feel it, you know? It's a cup."

He held a teacup in his hand and motioned with it. "If there's tea in it, I enjoy the tea."

"But not the cup?"

"I feel the cup—I don't see power. I don't get it. I don't know what it is." ♦


THE PARTICIPATORY BLUES
WELL, MY BABY LEFT ME THIS MORNIN'... ANY GUESSES WHY?
DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT?
YOU'RE NEVER AROUND?
YOU'RE TOO OLD?

ANNALS OF ADOLESCENCE

THE RETREAT

Fellowship, a youth minister, and me.

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN

We met on Sundays at five-thirty. We chose partners and blindfolded them and led them down empty corridors at breakneck speeds, as an experiment in trust. We made collages about protecting the environment. We did skits about navigating the emotional crises of seventh and eighth grade. We sang along while advisers played songs by Cat Stevens. We wrote haikus on the theme of friendship and read them aloud:

A friend stands by you
Even when you're in trouble
So it's not so bad.

A friend is a person
You think you can depend on
And usually trust.

My own contribution to this exercise—

You get a haircut
Ordinary people laugh
Do friends? No, they don't.

—referred to certain realities at my junior high, not in the group. People in the group, even the people I didn't consider friends, weren't allowed to laugh at you that way. This was one reason I'd joined in the first place.

The group was called Fellowship—no definite article, no modifier—and it was sponsored by the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves, Missouri, with some help from the Evangelical United Church of Christ down the street. Most of the kids in seventh- and eighth-grade Fellowship had come up together through Sunday school at First Congregational and knew each other in almost cousin-like ways. We'd seen each other in miniature sports coats and clip-on ties or in plaid jumpers with velveteen bows, and we'd spent long minutes sitting in pews and staring at each other's defenseless parents while they worshipped, and one morning in the church basement, during a spirited singing of "Jesus Loves the Little Children," we'd all watched a little girl in white tights wet herself dramatically. Having been through these experiences together, we'd moved on into Fellowship with minimal social trauma.

The trouble began in ninth grade. Ninth graders had their own separate Fellowship group, as if in recognition of the particular toxicity of ninth-grade adolescence, and the first few ninth-grade meetings, in September, 1973, attracted rafts of newcomers who looked cooler and tougher and more experienced than most of us Congregational kids. There were girls with mouthwatering names like Julie Wolfrum and Brenda Pahmeier. There were guys with incipient beards and foot-long hair. There was a statuesque blond girl who incessantly practiced the guitar part to "The Needle and the Damage Done." All these kids raised their hands when our advisers asked who was planning to participate in the group's first weekend country retreat, in October.

I raised my hand, too. I was a Fellowship veteran and I liked retreats. But I was small and squeaky and a lot more articulate than I was mature, and the upcoming retreat was looking less like a Fellowship event than like the kind of party I was ordinarily not invited to.

Luckily, my parents were out of the country for their wedding anniversary. I was spending the last three weeks of October as the ward of various neighbors, and it fell to one of them, Celeste Schwilck, to drive me down to First Congregational late on a Friday afternoon. In the passenger seat of the Schwilcks' burgundy Oldsmobile, I opened a letter that my mother had sent to me from London. The letter began with the word "Dearest," which my mother never seemed to realize was a more invasive and less endearing word than "Dear." Even if I'd been inclined to miss her, which I wasn't, the "Dearest" would have reminded me why I shouldn't. I put the letter, unread, into a paper bag with the dinner that Mrs. Schwilck had made me.

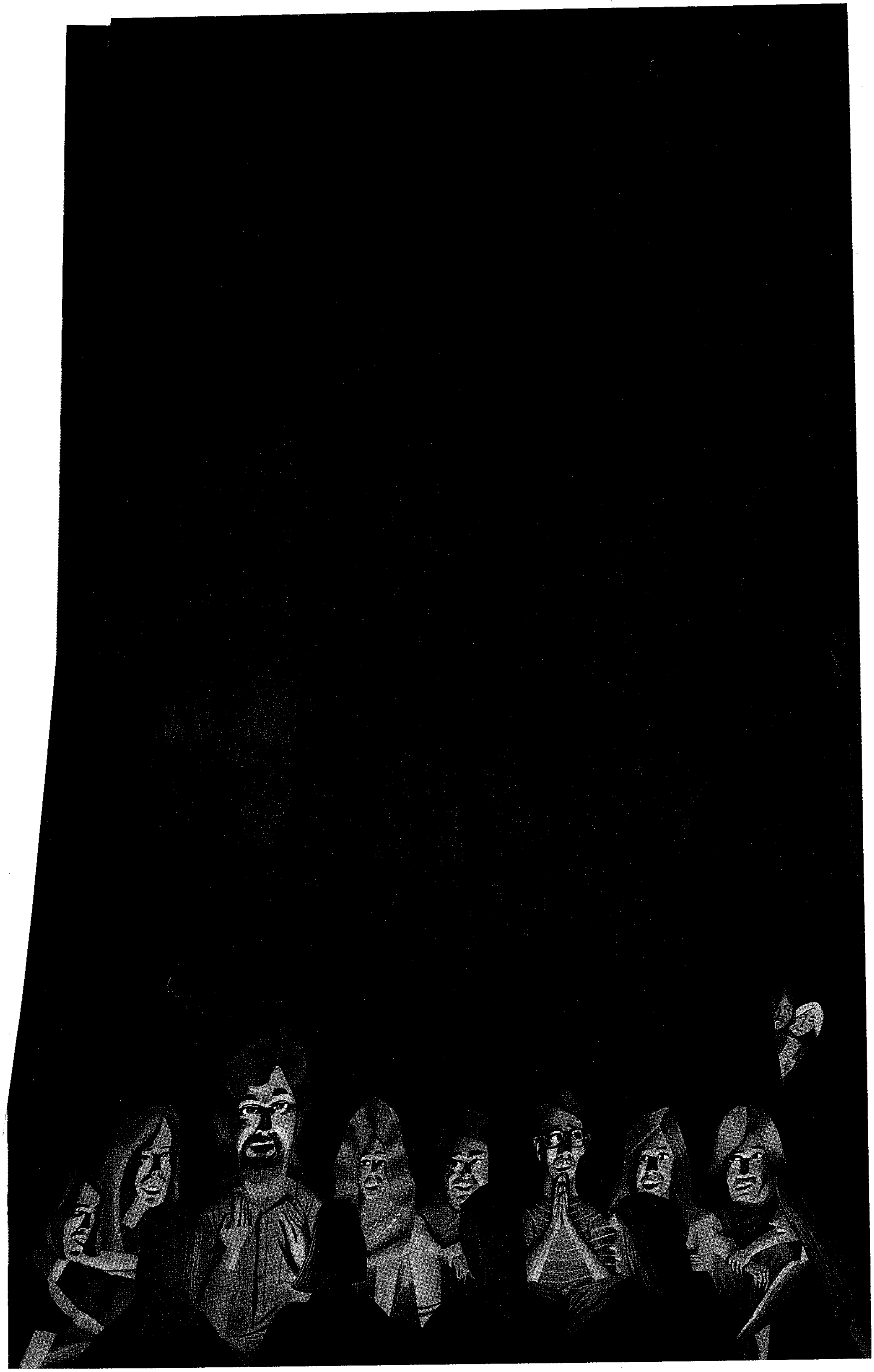
I was wearing my jeans and desert boots and windbreaker, my anti-anxiety ensemble. In the church parking lot, thirty-five kids in denim were throwing Frisbees and tuning guitars, smoking cigarettes, swapping desserts, and jockeying for rides in cars driven by the more glamorous young advisers. We were going to Shannondale, a camp in the Ozarks three hours south of St. Louis. For a ride this long, it was imperative to avoid the car of Social Death, which was typically filled with girls in shapeless slacks and boys whose sense of humor was substandard. I had nothing against these kids except a desperate fear of being taken for one of them. I dropped my bags on a pile of luggage and ran to secure a place in a safe car with a mustached seminarian and some smart, quiet Congregationalists who liked to play Ghost.

It was the season in Missouri when dusk crept up on you. Returning for my bags, I couldn't find my dinner. Car doors were slamming, engines starting. I ran around canvassing the people who hadn't left yet. Had anybody seen my paper bag? Five minutes into the retreat, I was already losing my cool. And this wasn't even the worst of it, because it was possible that, even now, somebody was *reading my mother's letter*. I felt like an Air Force officer who'd let a nuclear warhead go missing.

I ran back to my chosen car and reported, with ornate self-disgust, that I'd lost my dinner. But the mustached seminarian almost welcomed my loss. He said that each person in the car could give me a small piece of dinner, and nobody would be hungry, and everybody

MARK ULRIKSEN

Fellowship's youth minister was mobbed by kids who couldn't tolerate their parents but still needed an adult in their lives.



would be fed. In the gathering dark, as we drove south out of the city, girls kept handing me food. I could feel their fingers as I took it.

On my only Boy Scout weekend, two years earlier, the leaders of the Bison Patrol had left us Tenderfeet to pitch our tents in steady rain. The leaders hung out with their friends in better-organized patrols who had brought along steaks and sodas and paraffin fire-starters and great quantities of dry, seasoned firewood. When we young Bisons stopped by to warm ourselves, our leaders ordered us back to our sodden campsite. Late in the evening, the Scoutmaster consoled us with Silly Sally jokes that the older Scouts didn't want to listen to anymore. ("One time when Silly Sally was in the woods, an old man said to her, 'Silly Sally, I want you to take off all your clothes!' and Silly Sally said, 'Why, that's silly, because I'm sure they won't fit you!' ") I came home from the weekend wet, hungry, tired, dirty, and furious. My father, who hated all things military, was happy to excuse me from the Scouts, but he insisted that I participate in some activity, and my mother suggested Fellowship.

At Fellowship camps, there were girls in halter tops and cutoffs. Each June, the seventh-and-eighth-grade group went down to Shannondale for five days and did maintenance for the church there, using scythes and paint rollers. The camp was near the Current River, a spring-fed, gravel-bottomed stream on which we took a float trip every year. My first summer, after the humiliations of seventh grade, I wanted to toughen up my image and make myself more stupid, and I was trying to do this by continually exclaiming, "Son of a bitch!" Floating on the Current, I marvelled at every green vista: "Son of a bitch!" This irritated my canoe mate, Shoulberg, who, with each repetition, responded no less mechanically, "Yes, you certainly are one."

Our canoe was a thigh-fryer, an aluminum reflector oven. The day after the float trip, I was redder than the red-haired seventh grader Bean but not quite as red as the most popular eighth-grade boy, Peppel, onto whose atrociously sunburned back Bean spilled an entire bowl of chicken-noodle soup that had just come off the boil. It was Bean's fate to make mistakes like this. He had a squawky voice and a slide-rule sensibility and an all-around rough time in Fellowship, where the prevailing ethic of honesty and personal growth licensed kids like Peppel to shout, "Jesus Christ! You're not just clumsy physically, you're clumsy with other people's feelings! You've got to learn how to watch out for other people!"

Bean, who was also in Boy Scouts, quit Fellowship soon after this, leaving me and my own clums come inviting targets for oth honesty. In Shannondale th mer, I was playing cards wi enth grader MacDonald, a f hered girl whose granny glas arole King frizz both attracte nade me nervous, and in a mo eanish inspiration I decided be a funny joke to steal a loo onald's cards while she wa athroom. But MacDonald fa the humor. Her skin was so cl very emotion she experienced, r how mild, registered as some va ish. She began to call me Che as I insisted, with a guilty smirk dn't seen her cards. She called ater for the remainder of the t ing Shannondale, we all wrote fa tes to each other, and MacDon to me began, *Dear Cheater* and ed, *I hope someday you'll learn th to life than cheating.*

"*He makes it look easy.*"

Four months later, I certa n't learned this lesson. The well-b elt in returning to Shannondale th grader, in wearing jeans an g through the woods at night cquired mainly by fraud. I had t d to be a kid who naturally said "s t, a kid who hadn't written a boo h report on plant physiology, a b didn't enjoy calculating absolut r magnitudes on his new six-fi n Texas Instruments calculator. St into the Shannondale boys' barn, fying luggage from the Social De and claiming a bunk as far from could get, I relied on the fact th Fellowship friends went to differe nior high schools and didn't know was Social Death myself.

Outside, I could hear tight cliqu desert boots crunching along on Ozark flint gravel. Up by the Shann dale community center, in a cluste Fellowship girls with wavy album- hair and personalities that were sw the way bruises on a peach are swe two unfamiliar tough guys in Arm jackets were calling and respondin in high, femmy voices. One guy ha lank hair and sufficient hormones for a downy Fu Manchu. He called out: "Dearest Jonathan!" The other guy, who was so fair he seemed not to have eyebrows or eyelashes, responded: "Oh, dearest Jonathan!"

"Heh, heh, heh. Dearest Jonathan."

"Dearest Jonathan!"

I turned on my heel and ran back into the woods, veered off into tree litter, and cowered in the dark. The retreat was now officially a disaster. It was some consolation, however, that people in Fellowship called me Jon, never Jonathan. As far as the tough guys knew, Dearest Jonathan might be anybody. Dearest Jonathan might still be up in Webster Groves, looking for his paper bag. If I could somehow avoid the two thieves all weekend long, they might never figure out whose dinner they'd eaten.

The thieves made my task a little easier, as the group assembled in the community center, by sticking together and sitting down outside the Fellowship circle. I entered the room late, with my head low, and crowded into the antipodal portion of the circle, where I had friends.

"If you want to be part of this group," the youth minister, Bob Mutton, told the thieves, "join the circle."

Mutton was unafraid of tough guys. He wore an Army jacket and talked like a pissed-off tough guy himself. You made yourself look childish, not cool, if you defied him. Mutton oversaw the entire Fellowship operation, with its two hundred and fifty kids and several dozen advisers, and he looked rather scarily like Jesus—not the Renaissance Jesus, with the long Hellenic nose, but the more tormented Jesus of the northern Gothic. Mutton's eyes were blue and set close together below mournfully knitted eyebrows. He had coarse tangles of chestnut hair that hung over his collar and fell across his forehead in a canted mass; his goatee was a thick reddish bush into which he liked to insert Hauptmann's cigars. When he wasn't smoking or chewing on a Hauptmann's, he held a rolled-up magazine or a fireplace tool or a stick or a pointer and slapped his opposite palm with it. Talking to him, you could never be sure if he was going to laugh and nod and agree with you or whether he was going to nail you with his favorite judgment: "That is . . . *such bullshit*."

Since every word out of my mouth was arguably bullshit, I was trying to steer clear of Mutton. Fellowship was a class I was never going to be the best student in; I was content to pull down B's and C's in honesty and openness. For the night's first exercise, in which each of us divulged how we hoped to grow on this retreat, I offered the bland goal of "developing new relationships." (My actual goal was to avoid certain new relationships.) Then the group split into a series of dyads and small groups for sensitivity training. The advisers tried to shuffle us, to break down cliques and force new interactions, but I was practiced at picking out and quickly nabbing partners who were neither Deathly nor good friends, and I brought my techniques to bear on the task of avoiding the thieves. I sat facing a schoolteacher's kid, a nice boy with an unfortunate penchant for talking about Gandalf, and closed my eyes and felt his face with my fingertips and let him feel mine. We formed five-person groups and interlocked our bodies to create machines. We regrouped as a plenum and lay down in a zigzagging circle, our heads on our neighbors' bellies, and laughed collectively.

I was relieved to see the thieves participating in these exercises. Once you let a stranger palpate your face, even if you did it with a smirk or a sneer, you became implicated in the group and were less likely to ridicule it on Monday. I had an inkling, too, that the exercises cost the thieves more than they cost me: that people who stole sack dinners were in a far unhappier place than I was. Although they were obviously my enemies, I envied them their long hair and their rebellious clothes, which I wasn't allowed to have, and I half admired the purity of their adolescent anger, which contrasted with my own muddle of self-consciousness and silliness and posturing. Part of why kids like this scared me was that they seemed authentic.

"Just a reminder," Mutton said before we dispersed for the night. "The three rules around here are no booze. No sex. And no drugs. Also, if you find out that *somebody else* has broken a rule, you have to come and tell me or tell one of the advisers. Otherwise, it's the same as if you broke the rule yourself."

Mutton cast a glowering eye around the circle. The dinner thieves seemed greatly amused.

As an adult, when I say the words "Webster Groves" to people I've just met, I'm often informed that I grew up in a suffocatingly wealthy, insular, conformist town with a punitive social hierarchy. The twenty-odd people who have told me this over the years have collectively spent, by my estimate, about twenty minutes in Webster Groves, but each of them went to college in the seventies and eighties, and a fixture of sociology curricula in that era was a 1966 CBS documentary called "16 in Webster Groves." The film, an early experiment in hour-long prime-time sociology, reported on the attitudes of suburban sixteen-year-olds. I've tried to explain that the Webster Groves depicted in it bears minimal resemblance to the friendly, unpretentious town I knew when I was growing up. But it's useless to contradict TV; people look at me with suspicion, or hostility, or pity, as if I'm deeply in denial.

According to the documentary's host, Charles Kuralt, Webster Groves High School was ruled by an élite of "soshies" who made life gray and marginal for the majority of students who weren't "football captains," "cheerleaders," or "dance queens." Interviews with these all-powerful soshies revealed a student body obsessed with grades, cars, and money. CBS repeatedly flashed images of the largest houses in Webster Groves; of the town's several thousand small and medium-sized houses there were no shots at all. For no apparent reason but the sheer visual grotesqueness of it, the filmmakers included nearly a minute of footage of grownups in tuxedos and cocktail dresses rock-and-roll dancing at a social club. In a disappointed tone, as if to suggest just how oppressive the town was, Kuralt reported that the number of tough kids and drinkers at the high school was "*very* small," and although he allowed that a "minority twenty per cent" of sixteen-year-olds did place high value on intelligence, he was quick to inject a note of Orwellian portent: "That kind of thinking can imperil your social standing at Webster High."

The film wasn't entirely wrong about Webster High in the mid-sixties. My brother Tom, though not one of the film's six hundred and eighty-eight eponymous sixteen-year-olds (he was born a year too late), remembers little about his high-school years besides accumulating good grades and drifting in social backwaters with all the other non-soshies; his main recreation was bombing around with friends who had cars. Nor was the film wrong about the town's prevailing conservatism; Barry Goldwater had carried Webster Groves in 1964.

The problem with "16" was tonal. When Kuralt, with a desperate grin, asked a group of Webster Groves parents whether a civil-rights march wouldn't maybe "sort of inject some life into things around here," the parents recoiled from him as if he were insane; and the filmmakers, unable to imagine that you could be a nice person and still not want your sixteen-year-old in a civil-rights march, cast Webster Groves as a nightmare of mind control and soulless materialism. "Youth dreams, we had believed, of adventure," Kuralt voice-overed. "But three-fourths of these teen-agers listed as their main goal in life a good-paying job, money, success. And we had thought that, at sixteen, you are filled with yearning and dissatisfaction. But ninety per cent say they like it in Webster Groves. And nearly half said they wouldn't mind staying here *for the rest of their lives.*" Kuralt laid ominous emphasis on this final fact. The most obvious explanation for it—that CBS had stumbled onto an unusually congenial community—seemed not to have crossed his mind.

The film's broadcast, on February 25, 1966, drew so many angry phone calls and letters from Webster Groves that the network put together an extraordinary hour-long follow-up, "Webster Groves Revisited," and aired it two months later. Here Kuralt came as close to apologizing as he could without using the word "sorry." He offered conciliatory footage of soshies watching the February broadcast and clutching their heads at the pompous things they'd said on camera; he conceded that children who grew up in safe environments might still become adventurers as adults.

In the fall of 1967, as if to confirm this, First Congregational's associate minister gathered together sixteen teen-agers and one seminary student and made a proposition: How would they like to form a group to raise money to go to Arizona over spring vacation to help the Navajos? Out in the town of Rough Rock, a former church member had started a "demonstration school," the first Indian school in the country for which the Bureau of Indian Affairs would be ceding control to a local Indian school board, and he was looking for volunteers to work in the community. The minister figured that a couple of station wagons would suffice for the Arizona trip, but by the time the group left for Rough Rock, a day after the shooting of Martin Luther King, it filled a chartered bus.

The seminary student, Bob Mutton, was there on the bus with all the clean-cut suburban kids, sporting big sideburns and wearing his outsider's glower. Mutton had grown up in a blue-collar town outside Buffalo. He'd been a bad boy in high school, a pursuer of girls in the hulking '49 Buick convertible that he and his father, a machinist, had fixed up. It happened that one girl whom Mutton was particularly chasing belonged to a local church group, and the group's leader took an interest in him, urging him to apply to college. He ended up at Elmhurst College, a church-affiliated school outside Chicago. For a couple of years, he kept up his antisocial pursuits; he hung out with bad boys and he liked them. Then, in his fourth year of immersion in Elmhurst, he announced to his parents that he was going to marry a classmate, a working-class Chicago girl, and go to seminary. His father didn't like the seminary idea—couldn't a person be a Christian and still go to law school?—but Mutton felt he had a calling, and he enrolled at Eden Theological Seminary, in Webster Groves, in the fall of 1966.

It was a time when schools like Eden were attracting students who coveted the military draft classification IV-D, which was given to seminarians. Mutton and his first-year friends had rowdy parties in the dorm and laughed in the faces of the pious upperclassmen who complained about the noise. The longer Mutton and his wife stayed in Webster Groves, though, the less of a social life they had. Webster Groves was not a town of bluebloods, but it was full of upward middle-class striving, and the Muttons seldom met young couples they felt comfortable with. Mutton ate with his fork in his fist, like a shovel. He drove a car that burned almost as much oil as gas. He paid his school bills by working

MARINA

As I'm reading Tsvetayeva's essays,
"Art in the Light of Conscience,"
stunning—"*Art, a series of answers*
to which there are no questions"—
a tiny insect I don't recognize
is making its way across my table.
It has lovely transparent wings
but for some reason they drag behind
as it treks the expanse of formica,
and descends into a crack.

"*To each answer before it evaporates,*
our question": composed in Paris
during the difficult years of exile.
But which of her years weren't?
This at least was before the husband,
a spy, an assassin, went back,
then she, too, with her son,
to the Soviet madhouse, back.
"*This being outgalloped by answers*
is inspiration." Outgalloped!

Still lugging its filigreed train,
the insect emerges: fragile, distracted,
it can't even trace a straight line
but it circumnavigates the table.
Does it know it's back where it began?

Still, it perseveres, pushing
courageously on, one inch, another.
"*Art . . . a kind of physical world
of the spiritual . . . A spiritual world
of the physical . . . almost flesh.*"

One daughter, dying, at three,
of hunger, the other daughter,
that gift of a sugar-cube,
in her mouth, drenched in blood . . .
"*A poet is an answer . . . not to the blow,
but a quivering of the air.*"
The years of wandering,
the weary return, husband betrayed,
arrested, daughter in a camp . . .
"*The soul is our capacity for pain.*"

When I breathe across it,
the bug squats, quakes, finally flies.
And couldn't she have flown again,
again have been flown? Couldn't she,
noose in her hand, have proclaimed,
"I am Tsvetayeva," and then not?
No, no time now for "then not."
But "*Above poet, more than poet . . .*"
she'd already said it, already sung it:
"*Air finished. Firmament now.*"

—*C. K. Williams*

as a tile layer. When the time came to choose his field work, in his second year at Eden, he was one of only two people in his class to sign up for youth ministry. He'd become aware of a huge submerged population of lost teen-agers, some of them good students, some of them roughnecks, some of them just misfits, all of them undernourished by the values of their parents, and, unlike CBS, he gave them full credit for yearning and dissatisfaction. He'd been a kid like this himself. Still was one, basically.

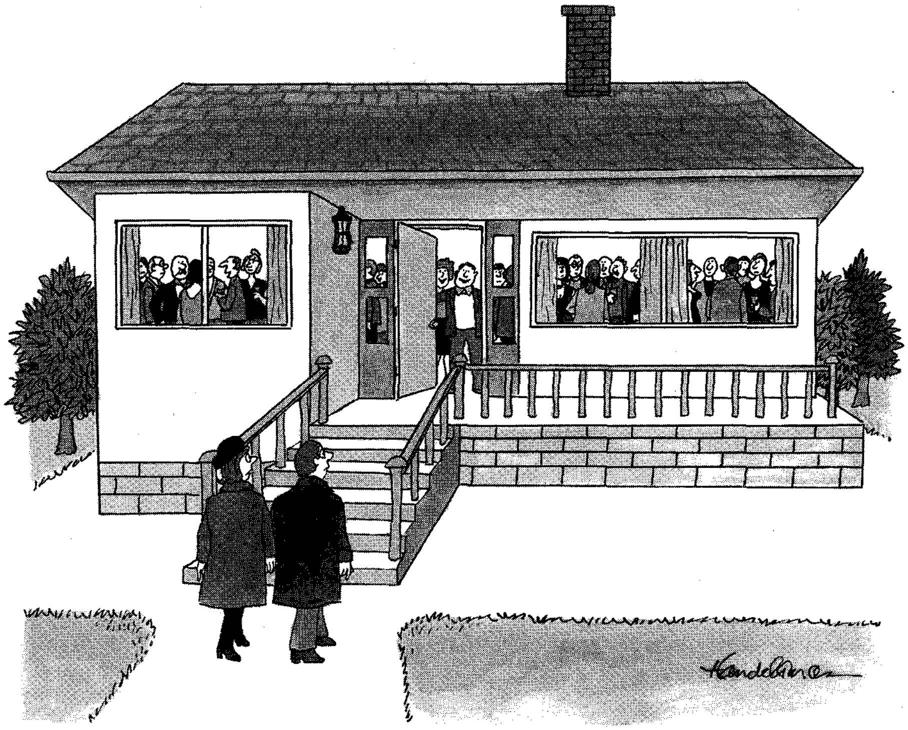
In churches the size of First Congregational, senior-high groups typically have thirty or forty members—the number that Fellowship had attracted in its first year. By June, 1970, when First Congregational hired Mutton as the new associate minister, the group's membership had doubled to eighty, and in the first two years of Mutton's ministry, at the historical apex of American disenchantment with institutional authority, it doubled again. Every weekday after school, church elders had to pick their way through teen-age feet in sandals, Keds, and work boots. There was a clutch of adoring girls who practically lived in Mutton's office, vying for space on his beat-up sofa, beneath his psychedelic Jesus poster. Between this office and the church's meeting hall, dozens of other kids in embroidered smocks and denim shirts were playing guitars in competing keys while cigarette smoke whitely filled the long-necked soda bottles into which everyone persisted in dropping butts despite complaints from the vending-machine company.

"I'll ask the youth minister to ask them again not to do that," the infinitely patient church secretary kept promising the company.

Kids from other churches joined the group for the romance of Arizona, for the twenty-hour marathons of live music that the bus rides in both directions quickly became, and for the good-looking crowds that came to the acoustic and electric concerts that Fellowship musicians held in the church on Friday nights. The biggest draw, though, was Mutton himself. As the overplayed song then had it, "To sing the blues / You've got to live the dues," and Mutton's blue-collar background and his violent allergy to piousness made him a beacon of authenticity to the well-groomed kids of Webster Groves. Working with adolescents was notoriously time-consuming, but Mutton, lacking a social life, had time for it. In his simmering and posturing and cursing, he stood for the adolescent alienation that nobody else over twenty in Webster Groves seemed to understand.

Mutton on a basketball court was a maniac with blazing eyes and a soaking-wet T-shirt. He whipped the ball to weak players at the same finger-breaking velocity as he did to strong ones; if you didn't get your feet planted when he was taking the ball to the basket, he knocked you down and ran right over you. On a confirmation retreat, if you were riding in his car when he stopped to buy Communion supplies, he turned to you like a peer and asked you for your help: "What kind of wine should I be looking for?" He talked about sex the same way. He asked what you thought of the European idea that Americans were passive in bed, and whether you knew the joke about the Frenchman who found a woman lying on a beach and started having sex with her, and his friends pointed out that she was dead ("Oh, sorry, I thought she was American"). He seemed ready to be guided by your judgment when he asked you what you made of certain New Testament miracles, like the loaves and the fishes. What did you think really happened there? And maybe you ventured the guess that some of the five thousand people who came to hear Jesus had had provisions secreted in their robes, and Jesus' message of brotherhood moved them to share their privately hoarded food, and giving begat giving, and this was how the five thousand were fed. "So a kind of miracle of socialism?" Mutton said. "That would be miracle enough for me."

"Parents complaining because their high school youngster spends too much time at church!" the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* exclaimed in a full-page article about Fellowship in November, 1972. "Parents forbidding a high schooler to go to church as a punishment!" Some



"*I think I'm having pre-traumatic stress disorder.*"

parents, both inside and outside First Congregational, thought that Fellowship might even be a cult. Mutton in poor light was mistakable for Charles Manson, and it was unsettling how much the kids looked forward to Sunday nights, saving their favorite, most worn-out clothes for the occasion and throwing fits if they missed even one meeting. But most parents recognized that, given the state of intergenerational relations in the early seventies, things could have been a whole lot worse. Mutton had the trust of the church's senior minister, Paul Davis, and key support from several leading church elders who had gone on early Arizona trips and come home sold on Fellowship. A few conservative congregants complained to Davis about Mutton's style, his long hair and beard, his Hauptmann's, and Davis listened to the complaints with active sympathy, nodding and amiably wincing and repeating, in his extraordinarily soothing voice, that he understood their concerns and was really grateful that they had gone to the trouble of sharing them with him. Then he closed his office door and took no action of any kind.

Mutton was like a bass lure cast into a pond that hadn't been fished in thirty years. No sooner had he taken over Fellowship than he was mobbed by troubled kids who couldn't tolerate their parents but still needed an adult in their lives. Kids came and told him, as they'd never told anyone else, that their fathers got drunk and hit them. They brought him scary dreams for his interpretation. They queued up outside his office door, waiting for individual conferences, suffering for not being the lucky person alone with him behind his closed door, and feeling that not even the joy of finally getting into the office could compensate for the pain of waiting. Everybody and his brother were doing drugs. Kids were watering the family Gilbey's and dropping acid in school bathrooms, smoking specially adulterated banana peels, popping parental antihistamines and grandparental nitroglycerin, consuming nutmeg in vomitous quantities, filling empty milk cartons with beer and drinking in public, exhaling pot smoke into stove hoods or the absorbent insulation of basement ceilings, and then heading on down to church. Three boys from good families were caught toking in the First Congregational sanctuary itself. Mutton sat for hours trying to follow the words of a founding member of Fellowship lately released from the mental hospital where a lysergic brain-scrambling had landed him. When a Fellowship girl informed Mutton that she'd got drunk at a party and had sex with three Fellowship boys in rapid succession, Mutton brought all four kids together in his office and, asserting a kind of patriarchal prerogative, made each boy apologize. A different girl, whose parents had confronted her with contraceptives that they'd found in her bedroom, refused to speak to them unless Mutton was summoned as a mediator. He was part Godfather and part Sorcerer's Apprentice, implicated in the lives of more and more families.

In September, 1973, the month before the ninth-grade retreat at Shannondale, a gifted seventeen-year-old boy named MacDonald came to Mutton's office and told him there were no more challenges in his life. MacDonald was the older brother of the girl who'd been so disappointed in my cheating at cards. He was about to start college, and Mutton didn't follow up on the conversation; a few weeks later, MacDonald killed himself. Mutton was devastated. He felt, at twenty-nine, overwhelmed and underprepared. A parishioner at First Congregational kindly lent him five thousand dollars, and he took up clinical training with a Christian shrink; and that was the beginning of the end of the golden age of Fellowship.

It was years—decades—before I found out about any of this. I was a latecomer to Fellowship in the same way I was a latecomer to my own family. When need-to-know lists were being made up, I was always left off them. It was as if I went through life wearing a sign that said "KEEP HIM IN THE DARK."

When my friend Weidman and I were discussing what a girl did when she masturbated, I thought I was holding up my side of the conversation rather well, but I must have said something wrong, because Weidman asked me, in the tone of a friendly professor, "You know what masturbation is, don't you?" I replied that, yes, of course, it was the bleeding, and the period, and so forth. In speech class, I failed to foresee the social penalties that a person might pay for bringing in his stuffed Kanga and Roo toys to illustrate his speech about Australian wildlife. Regarding drugs, I couldn't help noticing that a lot of kids at school were getting high to fortify themselves for classes. Missouri schoolyard pot in 1973 was a weak, seedy product, and users had to take so many hits that they came inside reeking of smoke the way the physical-science room reeked once a year, after the Distillation of Wood. But I was not a worldly fourteen-year-old. I didn't even know what to call the stuff that kids were smoking. The word "pot" to me had the quotation-marked ring of moms and teachers trying to sound hipper than they really were, which was unpleasantly close to a description of myself. I was determined to say "dope" instead, because that was what my friend Manley said, but this word, too, had a way of losing its cool on my tongue; I wasn't a hundred per cent sure that actual pot-smokers called marijuana "dope," and the long "o" shrivelled in my mouth like a raisin, and the word came out sounding more like "duip."

So if it had been me who crossed the Shannondale parking lot on Saturday night and smelled burning hemp, I would have kept my mouth shut. The weekend was proving less disastrous than I'd feared. The two dinner thieves had made themselves scarce to the point of actually skipping mandatory activities, and I'd grown so bold as to involve my old Sunday-school friends in a game of Four Square, using a basketball. (At school, the year before, Manley and I had instigated a half-ironic revival of Four Square at lunch hour, reconceiving it as a game of speed and English, and though Manley was too good an athlete to be sneered at, my own blithe advocacy of a grade-school girls' game was probably one reason my lab partner Lunte had been asked if I was a contemptible faggot and beaten up when he said no.) I'd sat in Ozark sunshine with my brainy friend Fawn and talked about Gregor Mendel and E. E. Cummings. Late in the evening, I'd played Spades with an adviser I had a crush on, a high-school girl named Kortenhof, while somebody else crossed the parking lot and smelled the smoke.

The next morning, when we convened in the community center for what should have been a short, music-driven, Jesus-free Sunday service, the advisers all showed up together in a grim-faced phalanx. Mutton, who turned pale when he was angry, was practically blue-lipped. It was clear right away that something serious had happened.

"Last night," Mutton said in a chalky voice, "some people broke the rules. Some people used drugs. And they know who they are, and they've got things to say to us. If you were one of those people, or if you knew about it and you didn't say anything, I want you to stand up now and tell us what happened."

Mutton took a step back, like a theatrical presenter; and six offenders rose. There were two girls, Hellmann and Yanczer, with swollen, tear-stained faces; a peripheral Fellowship boy named Magner; the two thieves, the fair-haired one and the tough guy with the Fu Manchu; and a snide girl in tight clothes who seemed attached to them. The thieves looked at once miserable and defiant. They said they mumble mumble mumble.

"What? I didn't hear you," Mutton said.

"I said I got high in the parking lot and broke the rules," spat Fu Manchu.

A physical gap had opened between the rest of us and the delinquents, who stood ranged against one wall of the community center, some glaring, others crying, their thumbs all hooked on the pockets of their jeans. I felt like a little child who'd spent the weekend doing silly feckless things (Four Square!) while serious grownup shit was going down elsewhere.

The girl Hellmann was the most upset. Even under normal circumstances, her eyes glistened and protruded a little, as if with the pressure of pent-up emotion, and now her whole face was glistening. "I'm so sorry!" she wailed to Mutton. Pressurized tears came spurting from her eyes, and she turned to face the rest of us. "I'm so sorry!"

Yanczer was a small, round-faced girl who tended to talk over her shoulder, leaning away from you, as if you'd temporarily changed her mind about leaving. She had her shoulder to the wall now. "I'm sorry, too," she said, looking at us sideways. "Although, at the same time, I feel, like, what's the big deal?"

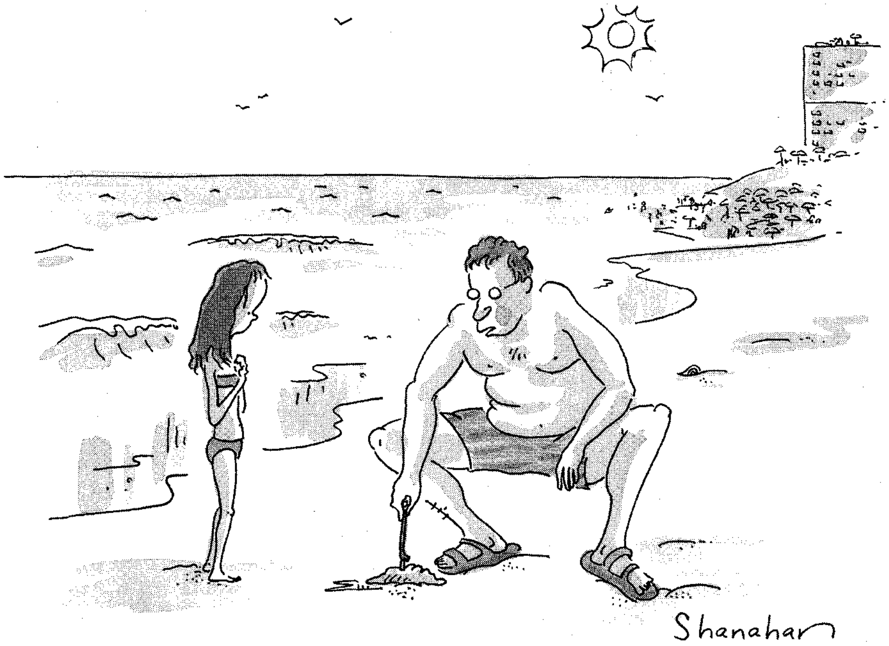
"We're a community here, that's the big deal," Mutton said. "We're allowed to do neat stuff because parents trust us. When people break the rules, and undermine that trust, it hurts everyone in the community. It's possible that this could be the end of the group. This weekend."

The thieves were passing a smile back and forth.

"What are you two smiling at?" Mutton barked. "You think this is funny?"

"No," the fair one said, tossing his nearly white locks. "But this does seem a little extreme."

"Nobody's making you stay in this room. You can walk out the door anytime you want. In fact, why don't you just



"It's not a Portuguese man-of-war. It's a breakfast crêpe."

leave. Both of you. You've been smirking the whole weekend. I'm sick of it."

The thieves exchanged corroborating looks and headed for the door, followed by the snide girl. This left Hellmann, Yanczer, and Magner. The question was whether to banish them, too.

"If this is the way you treat the group," Mutton said, "if this is the kind of trust level here, why should we want to see you next week? We need to hear why you think you should still be allowed to be part of this group."

Hellmann looked around at us, wide-eyed, beseeching. She said we couldn't banish her. She loved Fellowship! We'd practically saved her life! She cared about the group more than anything.

A pixie in faded coveralls countered, "If you care about the group, then why'd you bring these freakheads into it and get us all in trouble?"

"I wanted them to know what Fellowship was like," Hellmann said, wringing her hands. "I thought we'd be good for them! I'm sorry!"

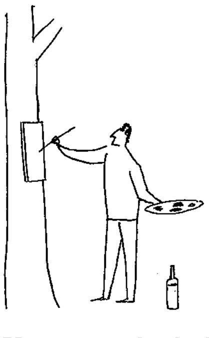
"Look, you can't control what your friends do," Mutton said. "You're only responsible for you."

"But I fucked up, too!" Hellmann wailed.

"Right, and you're taking responsibility for it."

"*But she fucked up!*" the pixie in coveralls pointed out. "How is she 'taking responsibility' for it?"

"By standing up here and facing you guys," Mutton answered. "That is a very hard thing to do. That takes guts. No matter what you all decide to do, I want you to think about the guts these guys are showing, just by staying in this room with us."



There ensued an hour-long excruciation in which, one by one, we addressed the three miscreants and told them how we felt. Girls rubbed ashes into denim and fidgeted with their Winston hard packs. Kids broke out in sobs at the thought of the group's being disbanded. Outside, crunching around on gravel, were the parents who'd driven down to give us rides home, but it was Fellowship procedure to confront crises without delay, and so we kept sitting there. Hellmann and Yanczer and Magner alternately apologized and lashed out at us: What about forgiveness? Hadn't we ever broken rules ourselves?

I found the whole scene confusing. Hellmann's confession had stamped her, in my mind, as a scary outcast stoner, the kind of marginal person I was afraid of and disdained at school, and yet she was acting as if she'd die if she couldn't come to Fellowship. I liked the group, too, or at least I had until this morning; but I certainly couldn't see myself dying without it. Hellmann seemed to be having a more central and authentic Fellowship experience than the rules-abiding members she'd betrayed. Here was Mutton talking about how brave she was! When my turn came to speak, I said I was afraid my parents wouldn't let me go to Fellowship anymore, because they were so antidrug, but I didn't think that anybody should be suspended.

It was past noon when we emerged from the community center, blinking in the strong light. The banished thieves were down by the picnic tables, tossing a nerf football and laughing. We had decided to give Hellmann and Yanczer and Magner a second chance, but the really important thing, Mutton said, was to go straight home and tell our parents what had happened. Each one of us had to take full responsibility for the group.

This was probably hardest for Hellmann, who loved Fellowship in proportion to her father's unkindness to her at home, and for Yanczer. When Yanczer's mother was given the news, she threatened to call the police unless Yanczer went to her junior-high principal and narked out the friend who supplied her with drugs; this friend was Magner. It was a week of gruesome scenes, and yet somehow all three kids dragged themselves to Fellowship the following Sunday.

Only I still had a problem. The problem was my parents. Of the many things I was afraid of in those days—spiders, insomnia, fish hooks, school dances, hardball, heights, bees, urinals, puberty, music teachers, dogs, the school cafeteria, censure, older teen-agers, jellyfish, locker rooms, boomerangs, popular girls, the high dive—I was probably most afraid of my parents. My father had almost never spanked me, but his anger had been Jehovan when he did. My mother possessed claws with which, when I was three or four years old and neighbor kids had filled my hair with Vaseline to achieve a kind of Baby Greaser effect, she'd repeatedly attacked my scalp between dousings of scalding-hot water. Her opinions were even sharper than her claws. You just didn't want to mess with her. I never would have dared, for example, to take advantage of her absence from the country and break her rules and wear bluejeans to school, because what if she found out?

Had I been able to talk to my parents right away, the retreat's momentum might have carried me. But they were still in Europe, and I became daily more convinced that they would forbid me to go to Fellowship—not only this, but they would yell at me, and not only this, but they would force me to hate the group—until I landed in a state of full-bore dread, as if *I* were the one who'd broken the rules. Before long, I was more afraid of confessing to the group's collective crime than I'd ever been afraid of anything.

My brother Bob and I were waiting at the airport in St. Louis on Halloween. Coming off the plane, my parents looked amazingly fit and cosmopolitan and lovable. I found myself smiling uncontrollably. This was supposed to have been the evening for my confession, but it seemed potentially awkward to involve Bob in it, and not until he'd returned to his apartment in the city did I understand how much harder it would be to face my parents without him. Since Bob usually came to dinner on Sunday nights, and since Sunday was only four days away, I decided to delay my disclosure until he came back. Hadn't I already delayed two weeks?

On Sunday morning, my mother mentioned that Bob had other plans and wasn't coming to dinner.

I considered never saying anything at all. But I didn't see how I could go back and face the group. The anguish in Shannondale had had the mysterious effect of making me feel more intimately committed to Fellowship, rather than less, as if we were all now bound together by shame, the way strangers who've slept together might wake up feeling compassion for each other's embarrassment and fall in love on that basis. To my surprise, I found that I, too, like Hellmann, loved the group.

At dinner that afternoon, I sat between my parents and didn't eat.

"Don't you feel well?" my mother finally said.

"I'm supposed to tell you about something that happened at Fellowship," I said, keeping my eyes on my plate. "On the retreat. Six kids on the retreat—smuiked some duip."

"Did what?"

"'Duip'? What?"

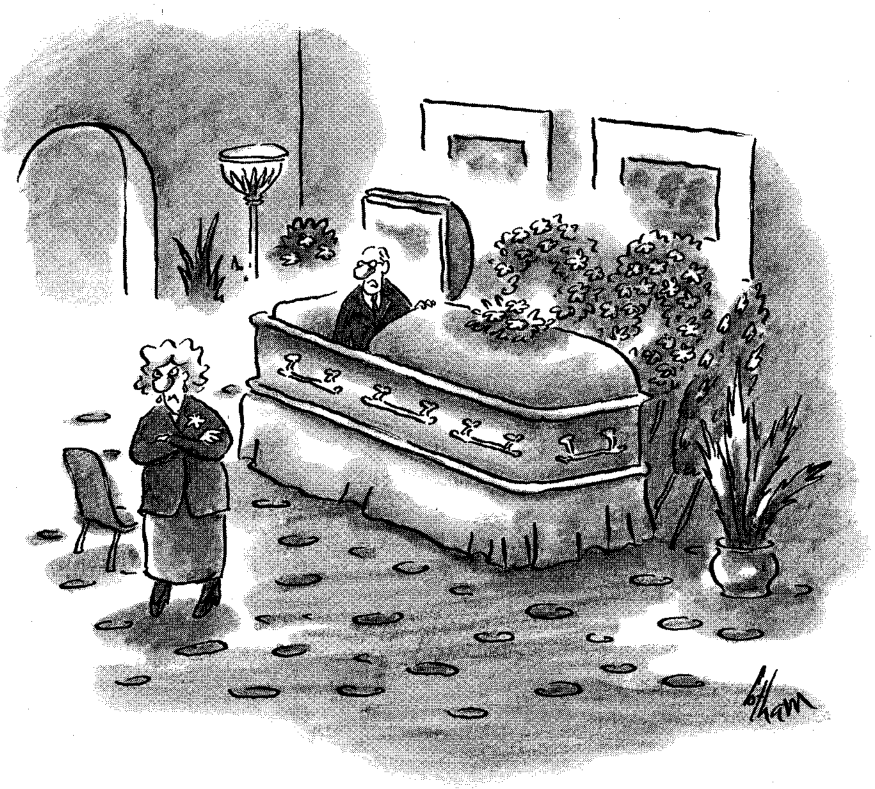
"Smoked marijuana," I said.

My mother frowned. "Who was it? Any of your friends?"

"No, mostly new kids."

"Oh, uh-huh."

And this was the extent of their response: inattention and approval. I felt too elated to stop and wonder why. It was possible that bad stuff had happened with my brothers and drugs in the sixties, stuff beside which my own secondhand offenses might have seemed ridiculously unworrisome to my parents. But nobody had told me anything. After dinner, buoyant with relief, I floated into Fellowship and learned that I'd been given the lead in the three-act farce, "Mumbo-Jumbo," that was going to be the group's big winter money-maker. Hellmann was playing a demure young woman who turned out to be a strangler; Magner was playing the evil swami Omahandra; and I was the callow, bossy, anxious college student Dick.



"I would have thought you'd be pleased."

• •

My dream as a tenth grader was to be elected to the Advisory Council, which was an in-crowd of sixteen kids who adjudicated rules violations and helped the advisers run senior-high Fellowship. Twice a year, in what were unabashedly popularity contests, the group elected eight kids to one-year council terms, and it seemed to me that I had some chance of winning in the spring. I was finally getting taller; I had new wire-framed glasses and permission to wear jeans to school twice a week. Somewhat mysteriously—it might simply have been that my face was becoming familiar around church—I no longer felt like potential Social Death. I tried out for the group's fall play, "Any Number Can Die," and was one of only two sophomores to get a part. On Sunday nights, when the big group broke into dyads for certain exercises, Advisory Council members came bounding across the room to partner up with me. They said, "Franzen! I want to get to know you better, because you seem like a really interesting person!" They said, "Franzen, I'm so happy you're in this group!" They said, "Franzen! I've been wanting to be your partner in something for weeks, but man, you're just too popular!"

It went to my head to feel noticed like this. On the year's last retreat, I nominated myself for Advisory Council. The full group gathered on Saturday night, after the ballots had been secretly tabulated, and we sat around a single candle. One by one, current members of the Advisory Council took new candles, lit them on the central candle, and moved into the crowd to present them to newly elected members. It was like watching fireworks; the crowd said "Ohhh!" as each winner was revealed. I pasted a smile on my face and pretended to be happy for the winners. But as candles approached me and passed me by and descended—"Ohhh!"—on other lucky souls, it was painfully clear how much more popular and mature than I the winners were. The ones getting the candles were the people who lounged around in semi-reclining, toboggan-style embraces or lay supine and propped their stockinged feet on nearby backs and shoulders, and who spoke as if they were doing genuine work on their relationships. The people who, if a newcomer was looking lost on a Sunday night, would race each other to be the first to introduce themselves. The people who knew how to look a friend in the eye and say, "I love you," the people who could break down and cry in front of the entire group, the people whom Mutton came up to from behind and put his arms around and nuzzled like a father lion, the people whom Mutton would have to have been Christlike not to favor. It might have struck me as odd that a group offering refuge from the cliquishness of high school, a group devoted to service to the marginalized, made such a huge deal of a ceremony in which precisely the smartest and most confident kids were anointed as leaders; but there were still two candles unaccounted for, and one of them was coming my way now, and this candle, instead of passing me by, was placed in my hands, and as I walked to the front of the room to join the new council in facing out to smile at the Fellowship that had elected us, all I could think of was how happy I was. ♦

FICTION

A MOUTHFUL OF CUT GLASS

BY TESSA HADLEY

The house where Neil was born, in 1952, had been at the center of Birmingham, in a Victorian slum that was knocked down a few years later. Nobody lived there now; there were only roads and office blocks, and the people who'd lived in the slums had been moved out to the new estates that ringed the city. Neil told Sheila that the house he was born in had had a crack in the outside wall that let the rain and wind through, so that for the years he lived there he and his sister had had to sleep in his mum and dad's room, because they couldn't use the bedroom upstairs. His sister had slept in a cot until she was six; he had slept in the bed with his parents. He told Sheila that the house had shared a yard at the back with several other houses in the terrace; there were outside toilets and a brick washhouse with a coal-fired boiler and a mangle where the women did their laundry. The house had been condemned by the council the whole time he lived there, but the family had had to wait for the authorities to find them somewhere else to live.

At university in Bristol in 1972, Neil didn't have to be ashamed of these things or hide them. Because of the politics of the time, the student politics especially, his origins were even glamorous. It was the children of bankers and managing directors who had to apologize for their upbringing, and practice roughening their too refined accents. Sheila had grown up, with eight brothers and sisters, in a vicarage in Suffolk; vicars' daughters were in a category so impossibly quaint and comical that it hardly seemed worth despising.

Neil could have played on his working-class credentials much more than he did. Sheila had never heard him tell anyone else, for instance, about the crack in the wall. This reserve, like a strength withheld, was part of what made her love him quite desperately. He was very clever and he had absolute opinions; friends glanced quickly at him after they spoke, to see what he thought. Sheila had never expected to love someone who was two inches shorter than she was. It was a surprise to discover how her desire could attach itself to the aura of Neil's power and not to the particulars of his face and body, which in her mental picture of him were always blurred. Although he wasn't fat, he was rather soft and shapeless; his walk was shambling and he hid behind his long brown hair. When he pushed the hair back, his face was round, sweet like a girl's. Yet just the thought of the quick, small, almost prim smile that flickered open in his expression when he was amused made Sheila sick with longing; it touched her more nakedly even than when he made love to her, because he did that with irony, holding himself back.

In the autumn of her second year, Neil took her home for a weekend to meet his family. He hadn't been especially keen to do this. He'd warned her that she would be bored, that his parents would make a big fuss, but Sheila had wheedled at him until he gave way. His family didn't have a telephone; he left a message with the neighbors. She braced herself then for something dark and raw, something that differed definitively from her own past. Whenever she remembered the vicarage she felt coilings of shame at the meanness of her life there. For all her family's crowded closeness, neither her parents nor her siblings were any good at intimacy; they communicated in evasive codes, fumbling and deflecting contact. She prepared a perfect openness for her visit to Neil's home, ready to offer up her real self at last.

They caught a bus from the coach station out to Northfield and then walked up through the estate. Rows of low gray houses curved behind open grass spaces, their front doors all painted the same red. Children were playing in the streets. A man was cutting a hedge with shears in a front garden. The place wasn't pretty, exactly, but it was neat and respectable. This took Sheila by surprise. She realized that although she knew that Neil's family had moved out of the slums when he was a child, she had gone on imagining him pressed upon by frowning Victorian concentrations of population.

Neil seemed relaxed enough; she had been afraid that her difference might embarrass him on his home ground. She'd expected him to move more self-consciously here, where he might be known and recognized, but he didn't lift his head to look out for old friends or greet them. He must have walked these streets with the same absorption as a schoolboy, all those years when he was taking the bus seven miles every day to the grammar school in town, where he'd got a free place, with the briefcase that his parents had proudly bought for him, full of the books that were going to educate him out of the estate.

"Clover Close," he said merrily. "Grassymead Lane. Oak Grove. Hazelbush Way. You'd almost think you were in the Forest of Arden if you closed your eyes. Except that real country addresses never sound anything like that. The test is if the name is as plain as possible, then you know it's the real thing. The ruling classes live in places called Old Hall. Stone House. Long End. The Rectory."

Sheila's home was called the Rectory, and it was in the country, but nowhere like the Forest of Arden. It was in a bleak, poor village in East Anglia, where the red brick rectory was the grandest building after the church. Neil had said once that his dad, who was a tool-setter at Lucas Engineering, probably earned more than hers; she had no idea if he was right.

Neil's dad, Dennis, stood waiting for them in his shirtsleeves and braces at the front door, which was on the side of the house, opening onto the kitchen. He was compact and smiling, with a round face and thick peachy skin, rosy where the blood vessels were broken across his cheeks; his springy gray-black hair was slicked back with Brylcreem. He had the air of a man used to performing a comical role, pleasant and placating. When Neil's mother, May, came crowding behind him in the doorway, wiping her hands on a tea towel, Sheila saw that she was small, too; Neil overtopped them both. Sheila was going to be the tallest person in the house.

"All right, son?" Neil's father grinned at him. "You can still find your way back home, then? Which bus did you get?"

He held out a disproportionately huge hand to shake Sheila's, and although he touched her with scrupulous gentleness she felt the strength in his grip. When Neil explained which bus they'd taken and how it had wound slowly around another estate for forty minutes, his father shook his head in disbelief: the eccentricity of the buses was clearly an old comfortable joke. In Bristol, Neil would have scorned such small talk. May, hanging back, kept her hands wrapped in the

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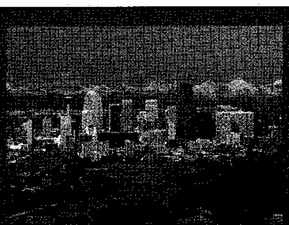

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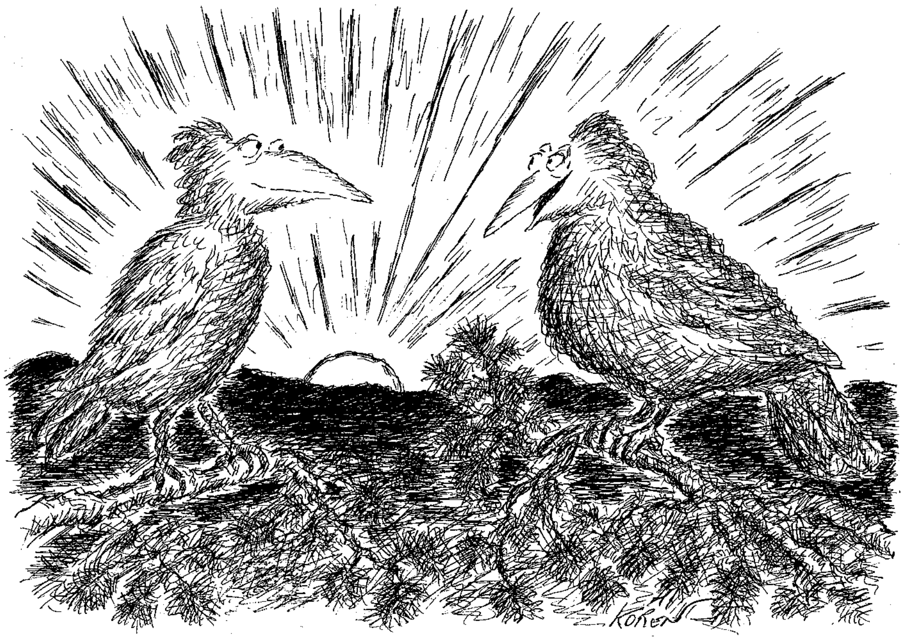

"Yes, I'm still getting up early, but these days it's good to check on the spot markets for oil and natural gas."

• •

tea towel, nodding and smiling shyly; she had a miniature figure like a doll's, with skinny little-girl legs gauche under her short skirt. Sandwiches made from sliced white bread, cut into perfect triangles, were set out on a counter on two plates, covered with paper torn from bread wrappers.

"I said not to make a fuss," Neil said to his mother, helping himself to a sandwich; May in a darting movement slapped at his hand, scolding him. "It's all right," he said, reassuring her. "Sheila hasn't got any manners, either."

May blushed and couldn't look at Sheila. "Don't take any notice of him," she said apologetically. "I don't."

Sheila heard now that Neil's Birmingham accent, which she had thought so strong, was softened and compromised, compared with the way his parents spoke.

"She'll have cooked us a meal, too," Neil warned. "This is just to tide us over."

"I thought after your journey you'd want something. Shall I put the kettle on for tea?"

The kitchen was too small to sit down in, so Neil and Sheila drank their tea on a sofa in the living room, in front of the gas fire turned up high. Sheila was so eager to please that she ate all the sandwiches on her plate, though she didn't know how she was going to manage anything else. The shoe-box-shaped room was a little gem of neatness. There were antimacassars along the back of the sofa and on the back of every chair, a glass-fronted cabinet full of ornaments, framed photographs on the tiled mantelpiece of Neil and his sister, Chris, of Chris's wedding. Neil had told Sheila that every Friday after his mother came back from her job at the bakery she stacked the furniture and rolled up all the carpets to wash the floor underneath.

"Are you at the college with our Neil then, Sheila?" his father asked.

Sheila was surprised that Neil hadn't told them more about her. She didn't talk to her parents much, but she was sure that they knew at least where Neil came from and what subject he was reading.

She explained that she was reading classics, Latin and Greek.

"Very interesting," Dennis said. "*Veni, vidi, vici.*"

"All that stuff. It's the Greeks that I love. Revenge and passion, the war between the sexes, justice on earth. Of course, it'll be no use to anyone after I've finished, but I don't care. My dad read classics, too, so it's in the family, I suppose."

"It's brewing that's in mine," Neil's mother said with a quick laugh. Sheila knew that May's uncle and brothers worked at Davenports, the brewers; they had got Neil a job there over the summer.

Neil ate only a couple of sandwiches, then he got out his cigarettes.

"Go on, have one of mine, son," his mother said, pushing a pack of Embassy Regals at him. "Do you smoke, Sheila?"

Sheila didn't. But she saw the moment of closeness it made between mother and son, heads bent together over the lighter, eyes narrowed and cheeks hollowed in inhalation. May had a little chrome-and-Formica smoking table at her end of the sofa, with an ashtray fixed in the center on a metal stalk. Although Neil's face was round like his father's, the wary sharpness in it made him resemble his mother more. Like Neil, May glanced evasively sideways at whomever she was speaking to. In his teen-age years, Sheila knew, Neil's mother had been his confidante, talking late into the night with him and his friends when he brought them home. She seemed more assured with the cigarette in her hand; a social manner descended on her, mildly rakish and teasing.

"I tried to get him to put something decent on, because you were coming." May nodded at her husband. "But he goes his own way."

"She's not bothered," Dennis said. "Are you, Sheila?"

"I'm so glad you didn't." Sheila smiled at them. "Look at us. We're a real mess. We don't want you to do anything different from what you do usually. Please."

She wondered what they thought of her clothes, a long crimson Indian skirt with braid around the hem and a crushed-velvet top embroidered with mirrors: these might be their idea of disgraceful rags. She hoped that her looks worked for her, though: her pale skin and long curling red-brown hair. She knew that Dennis was paying her subtle, harmless attentions because of them, without even knowing that he was doing it: spooning sugar into her tea and smoothing the creases out of her coat when he hung it up.

"You're right about Neil. He is a right mess. What about that hair? What does he think he looks like?" Dennis broke out suddenly.

"Oh, leave him alone," May said. "Why shouldn't he have it how he wants? That's how they all wear it now."

Neil smiled to himself: that private irrepressible smile of his, as if he couldn't help being delighted at some comedy he was watching. Dennis didn't seem to mean his complaint to offend anyone. He was a joker, an entertainer. You could see that he was the one to confront the public world, sheltering May, who had been brought up in an orphanage after her mother died and her father abandoned the family. Dennis took care to mention this more than once, as if the injustice of it still rankled with him.

"Sheila lives in a rectory," Neil offered. "Her dad's a vicar in Suffolk."

"That's nice," May said.

Sheila wanted to tell them about the rectory: how it was actually cold and bare and full of worn, scuffed furniture, not nearly as comfortable as this cozy room. But she didn't, because she was afraid they wouldn't believe her, and would think that she was patronizing them, trying to put them at ease because she found their home so poor.

May and Dennis got out photographs from a coach trip they had taken to Scotland. Before university, Neil had gone with them on these trips. He had explained to Sheila how, now that so many holidaymakers were going abroad, the big old country hotels that had once been exclusively for the wealthy had begun to cater to working-class coach parties. She tried to imagine Neil spending his days with a coachload of middle-aged Brummies, set apart by his youth and education, flirted with by the older women, thinking his own thoughts, taking an informed interest in all the places they visited. She found the idea seductive. He had certainly travelled more widely in Britain than she ever had, and knew more about its history.

In the photographs, Dennis was usually at the center, posed against some monument or other. Sheila was surprised that he and May relished so uncritically the grand style of their holiday: the food, the thick carpets, the ballrooms, the chandeliers, the free whisky at the distillery tour, the free soap in the bathrooms. She had expected that they would despise the luxuries of the rich, as she and Neil did. She felt a mixture of relief and deflation, as if she'd been cheated of something she'd braced herself to take on: some intensity of engagement, both scorching and testing. This is going to be easy, she thought. After all, they're just easy sweet people.

They put Sheila in Chris's old bedroom, in a bed made up with nylon sheets and the same rough old Army blankets her mother had at home. There wasn't much evidence of Chris left in the room: a framed embroidered picture of a squirrel, a hollow soapstone swan with a couple of hair grips in it on the dressing table. May assured Sheila that there was plenty of hot water because the immersion heater had been on all evening, but although Sheila rather longed for a bath, she didn't want to keep everybody waiting for the bathroom. She cleaned her teeth quickly. Everything in here was scoured spotless. The only difference between May's cheap thin towels and bathmat and the ones at home was that these had been cherished and ironed.

Sheila undressed and slithered down between cold sheets, then lay awake listening to the life of the house subside—low-voiced exchanges of practicalities, the sound of a bolt being shot to. She imagined that she was hearing what Neil had heard all his life before he came to Bristol. She was in that phase of the relationship where everything associated with Neil seemed to her charged with excitement, even the smell of the clothes he took off and left lying on the floor, even his favorite tracks on albums that she would never have chosen for herself, the Grateful Dead and Captain Beefheart. She couldn't sleep. After a while, when everything was quiet, she pushed back the sheets and knelt on the bed in her nightdress, looking out the window at the orange sodium lights and a flare of fire somewhere, perhaps from a factory chimney. Nearby she could make out the silhouetted dome of the lunatic asylum, which Neil had pointed out when he showed her the room—built in the nineteenth century in what had then been countryside. The air was chilly on her shoulders. The little house seemed to drop very quickly into cold once the gas fire was out, as if the walls were only a thin skin between the night and the lives inside.

She pressed down the handle on the

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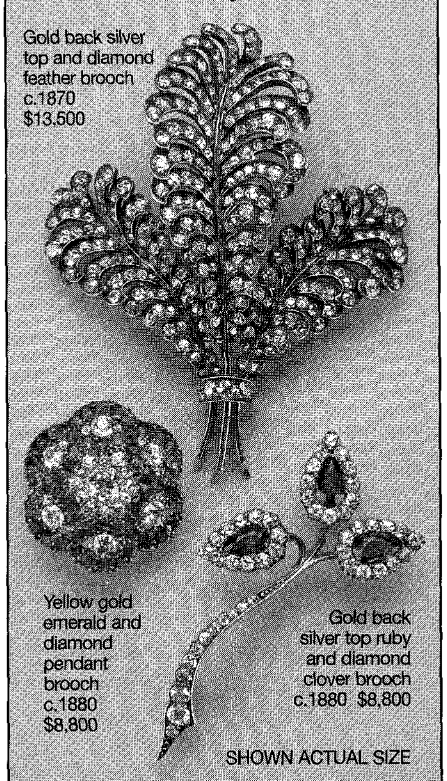
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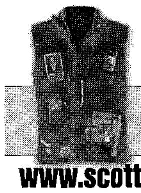
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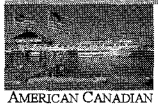
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bedroom door very carefully, then crept along the landing, trying not to make any sound on the lino with her bare feet. She knew which room was Neil's—she had looked into it earlier and seen his few books on a shelf, the only books in the house, and the old card table where he had done his homework for all those years. She slipped inside and soundlessly closed the door behind her. Neil reared up in bed; in the light from the street lamps she could see the mound of the blankets around his shoulders. Sheila cuddled quickly in beside him. She had let herself get thoroughly chilled, sitting looking out the window; now the heat of his body against hers under the blankets was like a flood. To her surprise he was wearing pajamas, which he never did in Bristol; they smelled of his mother's washing.

He hissed a protest at her frozen feet. "What are you doing?" he whispered in perplexity, grasping her by the shoulder. "We can't do that here."

"I can't sleep," she complained. "I miss you."

She pressed herself close against the length of him, kissing his neck and his ears, trying to undo his pajama buttons. He pushed her off.

"Sh-h-h. You can hear everything in this house. They'll know."

"We could be so quiet."

"No."

"Then just let me sleep here. I'll go back in the morning."

"They'll know. Honestly. Believe me."

"O.K. Let me stay for ten minutes."

To show that he was sorry, he kissed her then, but warily, not wanting to be carried away into anything. Their mouths tasted of meat, from May's casserole, which Sheila had eaten even though she was a vegetarian. With her lips she felt the growth of beard on Neil's jawbone, not bristling but silky; he was giving out his kisses one by one, skeptically, like a bird pecking. This tension of thwarted longing—even when they were on their own and could do whatever they liked—was somehow the whole character of their relationship. Sheila was always frantic for the next thing she didn't have from Neil; the sensation was as painful as wire spooled taut in her chest. She wondered sometimes what would become of them if the spool gave way and the tension slackened. After a while he stopped kissing her, and she knew that he really wasn't going to let her stay.

On the landing on the way back to her room, she heard May and Dennis talking in their bedroom. That was good; it meant that they weren't lying awake listening to her move about. She took a couple of cautious steps and stood where she might be able to catch what they were saying. She had never had any compunction about eavesdropping, or reading other people's letters or diaries; at home, with so many brothers and sisters, a certain level of surveillance had been almost necessary for survival—unless you sneaked, you never learned what was going on. Anyway, she always trusted herself to understand whatever she found out.

She couldn't really hear May and Dennis. May was angry about something. Dennis was soothing her: he rumbled, reasonable, sympathetic. They were both suppressing their voices, naturally, in this house of thin walls. May's tone was different from the one she'd used all evening: hard and final. Sheila knew at once that this must be her real voice, the one she used with people she was comfortable with.

"How can I talk to her?" Sheila heard May say then, quavering suddenly louder. "With that accent like a mouthful of cut glass?"

Sheila's heart heaved: the thud was so strong she even imagined that Dennis and May had heard it, until he rumbled again and she knew she was safe. It serves you right, she told herself immediately, not knowing quite what it was that she had deserved, or what for.

Back in bed, she lay huddled with her knees pulled up inside her nightdress, the taste of the casserole meat rising from her stomach. She was going over the work that she had to do for the following week: a Latin prose translation, an essay on Medea. But as she fell into sleep she recognized all of a sudden that May had muddled two quite separate expressions. How stupid, Sheila thought. It has to be either "talking through a mouthful of plums" or "an accent like cut glass." Not "a mouthful of cut glass." She's made nonsense of it.

For a moment, however, she could

imagine the sensation of chewing politely and sufferingly on a mouthful of broken crystal, tasting salty blood.

Neil came to the rectory for a few days after Christmas. Sheila never quite got over the surprise of his being there, where he didn't belong, among the left-behind scenes of her childhood. She knew that she was reacting badly to the situation—as if she were blinking into a light that distracted her from seeing him fairly. She was irritated when he seemed to get along with her parents. At supper the first night, he talked with her father about the Knox family; Sheila's family—the Culverts—was distantly related to them. A Culvert had been one of the first Evangelical bishops to be ordained in the Church of England: the old, sober kind of Evangelical, of course, not the new, guitar-playing excitable kind. Neil knew about the Ronald Knox translation of the Bible because his mother had been brought up a Catholic, and because he knew about so many things. Reverend Culvert told him about the Roman earthenware found in the scrubland, close to the river that the villagers called the Ditch; and about the carved flints that lay about in the fields for picking up. He sputtered mashed potato and gesticulated with pleasure at having someone informed to talk to. His own children kept their intellectual interests strictly apart from family mealtimes; they were embarrassed if their father ever veered from his habitual ironic distance. He was a tall thin man, whose head with its long earlobes was austere in repose, as if it were carved out of hard ancient wood; to see him so boyishly eager was somehow compromising, like watching a tortoise bob its skinny neck out from the decency of its shell.

Sheila was aware of how gratifying it was to her father that someone like Neil, who came from a working-class background, should be doing so well. The Reverend, despite the disappointments he was daily faced with—the sullen village boys, their cursing, their fatalism—kept up, in the solitude of his study, at least, a whole set of hopeful ideals that had to do with justice and progress. Sheila winced when he gleamed with pleased surprise at Neil's intelligent comments. She and her siblings had grown up with a horror that their father might sometime make a sermon out of the things that they did, or that happened to them. Sheila's mother, peculiar and ravaged, was simply grateful that the conversation didn't require her dutiful bolstering; she bowed her head low over her plate to eat, while the children exchanged veiled glances. The boys were horrible mimics: they would be mentally rehearsing Neil's accent. The gammon was too salty, and the parsley sauce had been made from a packet; Sheila ate only the mash and the Brussels sprouts. Her mother's cooking was loveless and institutional. An old book of fine recipes in French—a wedding present—sat unopened on a shelf above the kitchen stove, its pages gummed together by the steam from hundreds of pans of boiling potatoes.

"How can you not see how awful they are?" Sheila hissed to Neil the next day when she took him on a walk to get away from the house. They set out along the flank of the wide shallow valley, into a freezing wind that rippled the slate-colored water standing on the clay in the valley bottom, where the Ditch had overflowed. "They're so dried up, so false. Nothing they say is ever real."

He shrugged. "We all have to deal with things we don't like about our parents. At least yours don't make remarks about West Indians being too lazy to work and wanting to sit all day with a string tied round their big toe, fishing in the creek."

"I wish they would," Sheila said gloomily. "Does your dad really believe that?"

"Didn't he treat you to his Al Jolson impression?"

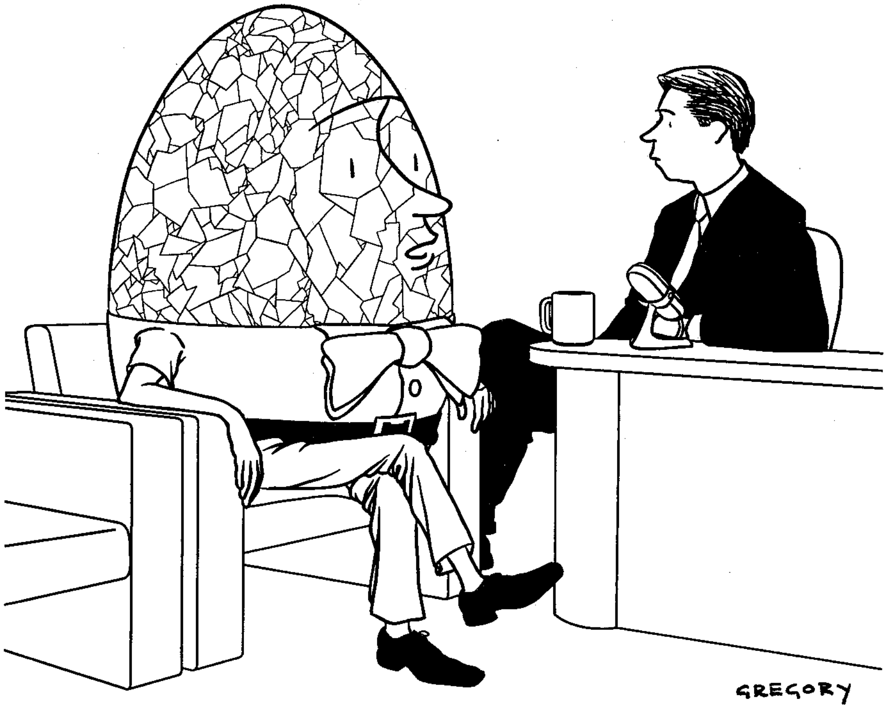
"But don't you see how sickening the opposite thing is, too? Always having to be up on the moral high ground. We actually have a family abbreviation for it, you know: the M.H.G. Mum shouts it when the kids are quarrelling: 'M.H.G! Back down and take the M.H.G!' Sometimes the whole family goes berserk—I can't tell you. My brother Andrew—the one who left home—once stabbed Stephen with a fork. He was shouting at him, 'Cunt, cunt, cunt!' Dad was trying to separate them, Mum was threatening to call the police. Then that evening when it had all died down we were just sitting around the table again, eating boiled liver or something, pretending that nothing had happened. 'Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time.' "

Neil laughed.

"You closed your eyes when he prayed at the table last night," she said accusingly.

"Did I? No, I didn't."

Sheila was walking backward ahead of him along the path, in her eagerness to convey to him the truth about her parents. The wind on her back whipped her hair across her face from under her knit-



"I did all my own stunts."

JONES
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ted hat. Mrs. Culvert had insisted that Neil, who didn't own a hat, borrow some awful thing from the tallboy in the hall which no one could remember ever wearing, a kind of bonnet with a furry lining and earflaps; it changed him piquantly, into a beady-eyed, perky cartoon animal. He seemed more interested in the landscape than in Sheila's family. He asked her the names of places they could see, which she didn't always know; he couldn't believe that she had lived here all her life and wasn't sure where north was. They reached a stand of beech trees growing on a slope about a mile from the village. Among the trees, the wind that had blown so insistently against them dropped, and they stopped to recover their equilibrium on a muffling carpet of dried leaves. The smooth trunks of the trees surging up out of the earth seemed present and intelligent, like gray beasts standing soberly to watch them. A musky mushroomy perfume rose in the stillness from the mulch underfoot. Neil put his arms around Sheila and kissed her; the embrace felt comical and unsexual through their bulky layers of jumpers, coats, and scarves.

"I could put my coat on the ground," Neil said insinuatingly into her neck, his earflaps scratching her chin. "It would be nice to cuddle up."

"You're joking," Sheila said in horror. "In broad daylight?"

Needless to say, at the rectory they were sleeping separately: Sheila was in her old room with her sister Hilary; Neil was in with Anthony and Stephen. "I feel awful," Mrs. Culvert had mumbled, not looking at Neil, bobbing her thick shock of gray hair and apologizing for there being no spare room that he could have to himself. "What you must think. . . . Of course we should—five bedrooms. Don't know if Sheila's told you about Gillian's problems?" (Gillian, who was eight, was epileptic, and had difficulty coping with school. She was seeing a psychiatrist in Cambridge; apparently she needed her own room. "Which makes me think she's smarter than she looks," Sheila had said.)

"We're out in the countryside," Neil said to Sheila, nuzzling her. "There's no one to see."

"That just shows how much you know about the countryside." She pushed him away from her with both gloved hands. "Everyone will know that we're up here already. If we don't walk on soon, they'll be looking at their watches."

"Who cares?" he said, trying again.

"I do," she said passionately. "Don't spoil this place for me. It's somewhere I used to come to be by myself when I was a girl, when I couldn't bear any of them at home. It's holy to me. I used to read poetry here."

Neil couldn't argue with that, and so they moved on, faintly mutually resentful long after they'd resumed holding hands and talking. In fact, Sheila had somewhat misrepresented the significance of the beech grove. She had used to go there with Hilary; she would never have gone walking anywhere around here on her own. It was true, though, that she and her sister had sometimes brought their books to the grove with them, and had worked themselves up over what they were reading into states of exalted excitement.

When they had all eaten their cauliflower cheese that evening, Mrs. Culvert suggested unexpectedly that they play games.

"We always do at Christmas," she explained to Neil. "Family tradition . . . no television. With you here we've got new blood, so to speak."

Neil was fairly appalled at the idea, and no one else seemed keen, but somehow when the washing up was done they nonetheless assembled to play in the front room, the girls snuggled around the meek warmth of the storage heater, with their jumpers pulled down over their hands, the boys erupting into spasms of kicking on the broken-backed sofa. Mrs. Culvert carried armfuls of props downstairs for charades and dumped them triumphantly in a heap: a fur coat, a parasol, straw boaters, an inflatable rubber ring for the beach, an air-raid warden's helmet, dog leashes, an evening dress of crinkled green Fortuny silk, a croquet mallet. The Reverend, in magnanimous concession, poured glasses of fizzy cider for everyone but the three youngest children.

Poor Neil was out of his depth. He had never played charades before, and he was hopeless at it. His team acted "Eucharist," and for "ewe" they dressed him up as a shepherd in a stripy flannelette sheet with a crook left over from someone's Nativity play. Nola and Patricia frisked around his feet, baaing, while Hilary, who was usually earnest and silent, followed on all fours, wrapped in a sheepskin rug from the study. Neil made no effort to get into the role of the shepherd; he batted uncomfortably at the girls with his crook and almost ruined everything by mumbling pointedly, "And here's the ewe," when Hilary appeared.

The Culverts threw themselves into these games, once they got started, with an extravagance that was almost a mania. For "wrist," Reverend Culvert put on the green silk dress and minced up and down with his wife's handbag, drooping his wrist and exclaiming, "Dear me, ducky." Neil looked frankly astonished. He wasn't much better at guessing, either. Hilary and her father got Sheila's team's word—"seductress"—long before Neil did; they held back to give him a chance, and he stared miserably, bemusedly, at Mrs. Culvert's egg-laying ("Poultry?" he ventured), and at Stephen as a hairdresser perming Anthony's blond nylon wig. Sheila, acting the whole word in the finale, in her father's silk dressing gown and a pair of old high heels, was languidly seductive as Neil had never seen her: husky-voiced, rolling her hips, adjusting her stocking, letting the dressing gown fall open when she sat down, smoothing her perfectly shaped long legs. She patted a place beside her on the sofa for her mother, dressed as a shy boy, in tails with a top hat and cane, a mustache drawn with a black mascara brush on her upper lip; she pulled the boy over by his tie to kiss her. Neil was dismayed to feel strong stirrings of desire as he watched.

"Never mind!" Mrs. Culvert said to him consolingly when the game was over and they all sat flushed and panting among the disregarded heaps of costumes and props, bubbling weakly with smiles and shamed giggles at what they had done. Mrs. Culvert still had her mustache. "Awfully silly, really," she said. "You'll get the hang of it next time."

The next morning, Sheila and Hilary walked up the shortcut through the garden on their way back from buying hair dye at the shop in the village; Sheila was determined to do something with Hilary's mousy hair. The shortcut meant that they had to plow through dead weeds and brambles at the long garden's bottom end. A wet mist, like sticky grubby wool, was still clinging to the earth at ten o'clock, and their trousers were almost immediately soaked to the knees, the water seeping through their desert boots to their socks. They tugged at the naked branches of a silver birch overhead to drench each other thoroughly, squealing in the shower of drops. For the first time, Sheila experienced a rush of strong feeling for her home and her past, a tenderness for the winter garden's desolation. The same gray, sodden dishcloths had been left hanging for months on the washing line. A plastic bucket was half filled with rotting apples from the trees. Children's trikes and an old pedal car had been left out to rot, too. Everything in the flower beds had overgrown and died, and now the silky seed heads and swollen blackened pods, slashed down by wind and rain, lay dissolving into the earth.

The daylight was so grudging that the lamp was turned on in the vicar's study. The sisters had often watched their father from out here, as he rehearsed his sermons or conducted symphonies on the gramophone, thinking nobody could see him. Neil had found some LPs that Andrew had left behind, and Reverend Culvert, who was visiting elderly parishioners in hospital this morning, had said at breakfast that he could play them in the study if he wanted to. Through the French windows, the girls could see him sitting cross-legged on the floor, smoking, his hair falling forward across his face. He was swaying his head in time to a song they couldn't hear: rock music, Frank Zappa probably, nothing that the dusty old study with its walls of books had ever been treated to before. (Andrew had had his own hi-fi, which he had taken away with him.) Hilary couldn't help bursting out with a snort of laughter.

"I'm sorry, Shuggs, but he does look funny."

"It's all right," Sheila said. "I know he does."

She was taken aback by this stranger of hers, ensconced so outrageously in the innermost sanctum of her family home. The shock of it was voluptuous; she felt with a shudder that the closer Neil came to her, the less familiar he was. She would have liked to see her life as he saw it, stripped of its ordinariness; she wished that she could possess him as he only was when he was alone. She heard a soft thud and a rattle of glass; Neil heard it, too, from inside the room and turned his head. Hilary had picked out one of the tiny half-rotten apples from the bucket and pitched it at the study windows, dropping to hide herself behind a stretch of overgrown wall where there had once been a greenhouse. When Neil looked away again, she stood up to pitch another one; Sheila joined in. Neil got to his feet. It must have been difficult, with the light on, for him to see them in the murky day outside. He came over and peered through the French windows and they threw apples at him, not bothering in the end to hide, standing out in the gray daylight as he watched them, hurling all the apples at him, one after another, until they reached a layer of impossibly mushy ones at the very bottom of the bucket. ♦

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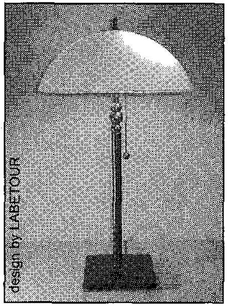

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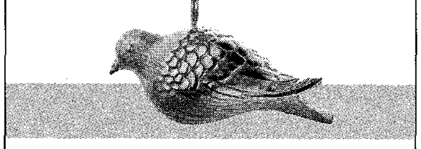

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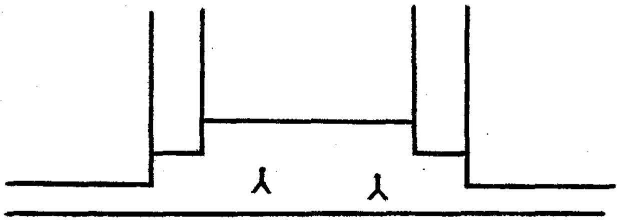


A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE RECORD EFFECT

How technology has transformed the sound of music.

BY ALEX ROSS

Ninety-nine years ago, John Philip Sousa predicted that recordings would lead to the demise of music. The phonograph, he warned, would erode the finer instincts of the ear, end amateur playing and singing, and put professional musicians out of work. "The time is coming when no one will be ready to submit himself to the ennobling discipline of learning music," he wrote. "Everyone will have their ready made or ready pirated music in their cupboards." Something is irretrievably lost when we are no longer in the presence of bodies making music, Sousa said. "The nightingale's song is delightful because the nightingale herself gives it forth."

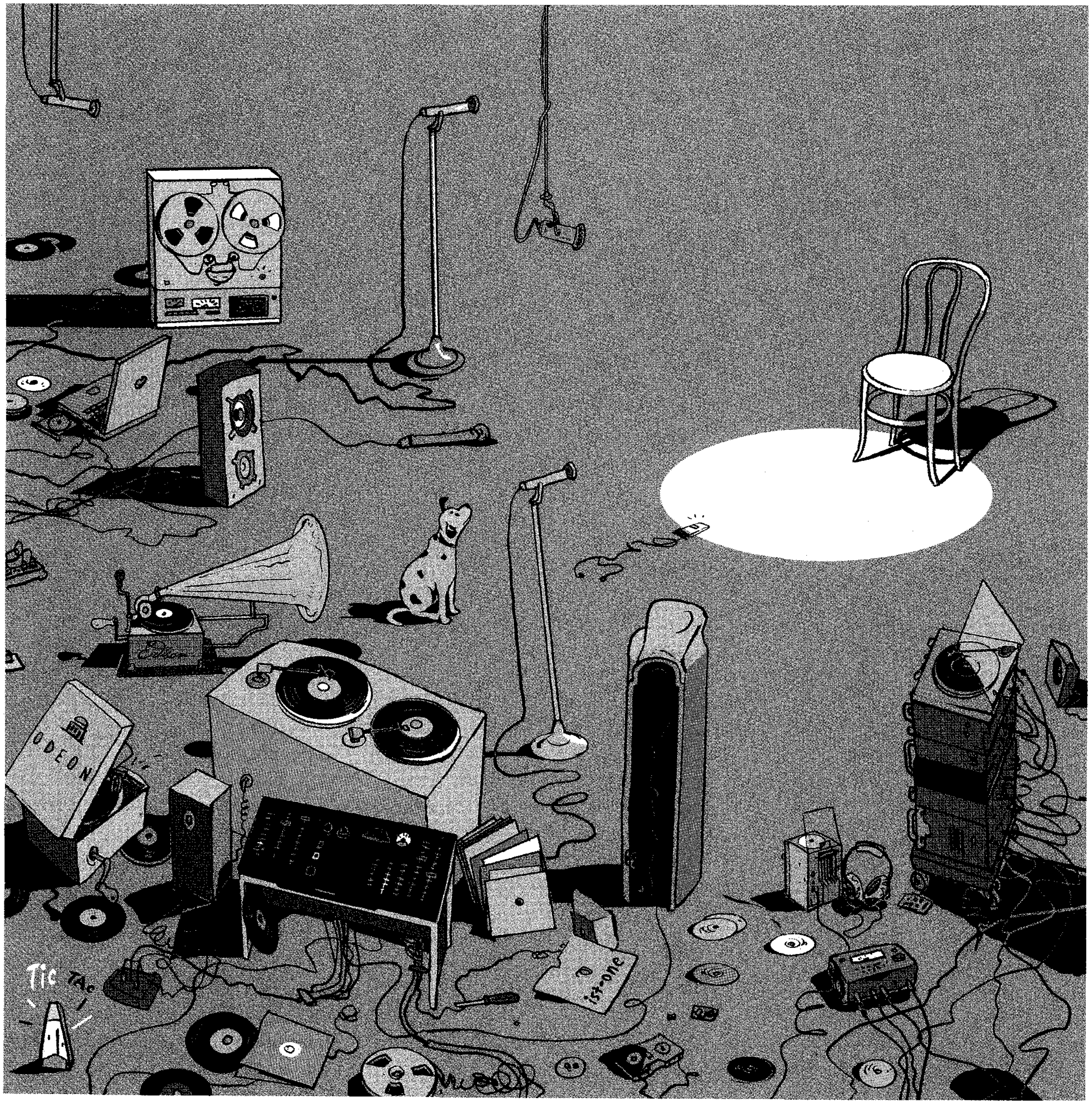
Before you dismiss Sousa as a nutty old codger, you might ponder how much has changed in the past hundred years. Music has achieved onrushing omnipresence in our world: millions of hours of its history are available on disk; rivers of digital melody flow on the Internet; MP3 players with ten thousand songs can be tucked in a back pocket or a purse. Yet, for most of us, music is no longer something we do ourselves, or even watch other people doing in front of us. It has become a radically virtual medium, an art without a face. In the future, Sousa's ghost might say, reproduction will replace production entirely. Zombified listeners will shuffle through the archives of the past, and new music will consist of rearrangements of the old.

Ever since Edison introduced the wax cylinder, in 1877, people have been trying to figure out what recording has done for and to the art of music. Inevitably, the conversation has veered toward rhetorical extremes. Sousa was a pioneering spokesman for the party of doom, which was later filled out by various post-Marxist theorists. In the opposite corner are the technological utopians, who will tell you that recording has not imprisoned music but liberated it, bringing the art of the élite to the masses and the art of the margins to the center. Before Edison came along, the utopians say, Beethoven's symphonies could be heard only in select concert halls. Now CDs carry the man from Bonn to the corners of the earth, summoning forth the million souls he hoped to embrace in his "Ode to Joy." Conversely, recordings gave the likes of Louis Armstrong, Chuck Berry, and James Brown the chance to occupy a global platform that Sousa's idyllic old America, racist to the core, would have denied them. The fact that their records played a crucial role in the advancement of African-American civil rights puts in proper perspective the aesthetic debate about whether or not technology has been "good" for music.

I discovered much of my favorite music through LPs and CDs, and I am not about to join the party of Luddite lament. Modern urban environments are often so chaotic, soulless, or ugly that I'm grateful for the humanizing touch of electronics. But I want to be aware of technology's effects, positive and negative. For music to remain vital, recordings have to exist in balance with live performance, and, these days, live performance is by far the smaller part of the equation. Perhaps we tell ourselves that we listen to CDs in order to get to know the music better, or to supplement what we get from concerts and shows. But, honestly, a lot of us don't go to hear live music that often. Work leaves us depleted. Tickets are too expensive. Concert halls are stultifying. Rock clubs are full of kids who make us feel ancient. It's just so much easier to curl up in the comfy chair with a Beethoven quartet or Billie Holiday. But would Beethoven or Billie ever have existed if people had always listened to music the way we listen now?

"The machine is neither a god nor a devil," the German music critic Hans Stuckenschmidt wrote in 1926, in an essay on the mechanization of music. That eminently reasonable sentiment appears as an epigraph to Mark Katz's "Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music" (California; $19.95). It's one of a number of recent books on the history of recording; two others are Colin Symes's "Setting the Record Straight: A Material History of Classical Recording" (Wesleyan; $39.95), which analyzes how the discourse around LPs and CDs shapes what we hear, and Robert Philip's "Performing Music in the Age of Recording" (Yale; $35), which advances a potent thesis about how the phonograph transformed classical culture. Katz's book is the most approachable of these tomes. In lucid, evenhanded prose, it ranges all over the map, from classical to hip-hop. Although Katz believes that machines have profoundly affected how music is played and heard, he discourages a monolithic, deterministic idea of their impact. Ultimately, he says, the technology reflects whatever musical culture is exploiting it. The machine is a mirror of our needs and fears.

The principal irony of phonograph history is that the machine was not invented with music in mind. Edison conceived of his cylinder as a tool for business communication: it would replace the costly, imperfect practice of



The paradox of recording is that it can preserve music forever but not the spark of humanity that generates it.

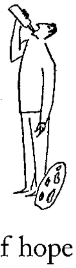
ISTVAN BANYAI

stenography, and would have the added virtue of preserving in perpetuity the voices of the deceased. In an 1878 essay, Edison (or his ghostwriter) proclaimed portentously that his invention would "annihilate time and space, and bottle up for posterity the mere utterance of man." Annihilation is, of course, an ambiguous figure of speech. Recording broke down barriers between cultures, but it also placed more archaic musical forms in danger of extinction. In the early years of the century, Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, and Percy Grainger used phonographs to preserve the voices of elderly folksingers whose timeless ways were being stamped out by the advance of modern life. And what was helping to stamp them out? The phonograph, with its international hit tunes and standardized popular dances.

In the eighteen-nineties, alert entrepreneurs installed phonographs in penny arcades, allowing customers to listen to favorite songs over ear tubes. By 1900, the phonograph was being marketed as a purely musical device. Its first great star was an operatic tenor, Enrico Caruso, whose voice remains one of the most transfixing phenomena in the history of the medium. The *ping* in his tone, that golden bark, penetrated the haze of the early technology and made the man himself viscerally present. Not so lucky was Johannes Brahms, who, in 1889, attempted to play his First Hungarian Dance for Edison's cylinder. It sounds as if the Master were coming to us from a spacecraft disintegrating near Pluto. There was something symbolic in Edison's inability to register so titanic a presence as Brahms: despite Caruso's fame, and despite later fads for Toscanini, Bernstein, and Glenn Gould, classical music had a hard time getting a foothold in this slippery terrain. From the start, the phonograph favored brassy singing, knife-edged winds and brass, the thump of percussion—whatever could best puncture surface noise. Louis Armstrong's trumpet blasted through the crackle and pop of early records like no other instrument or voice of the time—he was Caruso's heir. Pianos, by contrast, were muddled and muffled; violins were all but inaudible. Classical music, with its softer-edged sounds, entered the recording era at a disadvantage. The age of the cowbell had begun.

Whenever a new gadget comes along, salesmen inevitably point out that an older gadget has been rendered obsolete. The automobile pushed aside the railroad; the computer replaced the typewriter. Sousa feared that the phonograph would supplant live music-making. His fears were excessive but not irrational. Early ads for the phonograph took aim at the piano, which, around the turn of the century, was the center of domestic musical life, from the salon to the tavern. The top-selling Victrola of 1906 was encased in "piano-finished" mahogany, if anyone was missing the point. An ad reproduced in Colin Symes's book shows a family clustered about a phonograph, no piano in sight. Countless ad campaigns since have claimed that recordings are just as good as live performances, possibly better—combining, supposedly, the warmth of live music with the comfort of home. They have provided, to use some well-worn phrases, "the best seat in the house," "living presence," "perfect sound forever." They inspired the famous question "Is it live or is it Memorex?" (If it's Memorex, is it dead?) Edison was so determined to demonstrate the verisimilitude of his machines that he held a nationwide series of Tone Tests, during which halls were plunged into darkness and audiences were supposedly unable to tell the difference between Anna Case singing live and one of her records.

It's easy to laugh now at the spectacle of the Tone Tests. Either Edison was engaging in serious hanky-panky or audiences were so eager to embrace the new technology that they hypnotized themselves into ignoring the wheeze of cylinder static. But a hipper form of the same mumbo-jumbo is heard in high-end audio showrooms, where ten-thousand-dollar systems purport to re-create an orchestra in your living room. Even if such a machine existed, the question once posed by the comedians Flanders and Swann lingers: Why would we *want* an orchestra in our living room? Isn't the idea of sitting in a room listening to a tape of five hundred people performing the Mahler Eighth Symphony totally bizarre—the diametrical opposite of the great communal ceremonies that Mahler yearned to enact? So says the party of doom. The party of hope responds: Audiences generally ignored or misunderstood Mahler until repeated listening on LPs made his music comprehensible.



Like Heisenberg's mythical observer, the phonograph was never a mere recorder of events: it changed how people sang and played. Katz, in a major contribution to the lingo, calls these changes "phonograph effects." (The phrase comes from the digital studio, where it is used to describe the crackling, scratching noises that are sometimes added to pop-music tracks to lend them an appealingly antique air.) Katz devotes one striking chapter to a fundamental change in violin technique that took place in the early twentieth century. It involved vibrato—that trembling action of the hand on the fingerboard, whereby the player is able to give notes a warbling sweetness. Until about 1920, vibrato was applied quite sparingly. On a 1903 recording, the great violinist Joseph Joachim uses it only to accentuate certain highly expressive notes. (The track is included on a CD that comes with Katz's book.) Around the same time, Fritz Kreisler began applying vibrato almost constantly. By the nineteen-twenties, most leading violinists had adopted Kreisler's method. Was it because they were imitating him? Katz proposes that the change came about for a more pedestrian reason. When a wobble was added to violin tone, the phonograph was able to pick it up more easily: it's a "wider" sound in acoustical terms, a blob of several superimposed frequencies. Also, the fuzzy focus of vibrato enabled players to cover up slight inaccuracies of intonation, and, from the start, the phonograph made players self-conscious about intonation in ways they had never been before. What worked in the studio then spread to the concert stage. Katz can't prove that the phonograph was responsible for the change, but he makes a good case.

Composers, who had reigned like gods over the dearly departed nineteenth century, were uncertain and quizzical in the face of the new device. Symes amusingly tracks the ambivalence of Igor Stravinsky, who styled himself the most impeccably up-to-date of composers. In 1916, the conductor Ernest Ansermet brought Stravinsky a stack of American pop records, Jelly Roll Morton rags apparently among them, and the composer swooned. "The musical ideal," he called them, "music spontaneous and 'useless,' music that wishes to express nothing." (Just what Jelly Roll was after!) Stravinsky began writing with the limitations of the phonograph in mind: short movements, small groups of instruments, lots of winds and brass, few strings. On his first American tour, in 1925, he signed a contract at Brunswick Studios, where Duke Ellington later set down "East St. Louis Toodle-O." Then, in the next decade, he abruptly adopted the John Philip Sousa line: "Oversaturated with sounds, blasé even before combinations of the utmost variety, listeners fall into a kind of torpor which deprives them of all power of discrimination." By the nineteen-forties, Stravinsky was living in America, and, seeking new avenues of exposure, he embraced recording once again. He went so far as to endorse the Stromberg-Carlson Custom 400 loudspeaker, comparing it to a "fine microscope." You could try to find some consistent theory behind these statements, but the short version is that Stravinsky was confused.

The youngest composers of the twenties—those who had come of age during and after the First World War—had no hesitation about submitting to the phonograph. Perhaps Katz's most fascinating chapter is devoted to the short-lived *Grammophonmusik* phenomenon in German music of the

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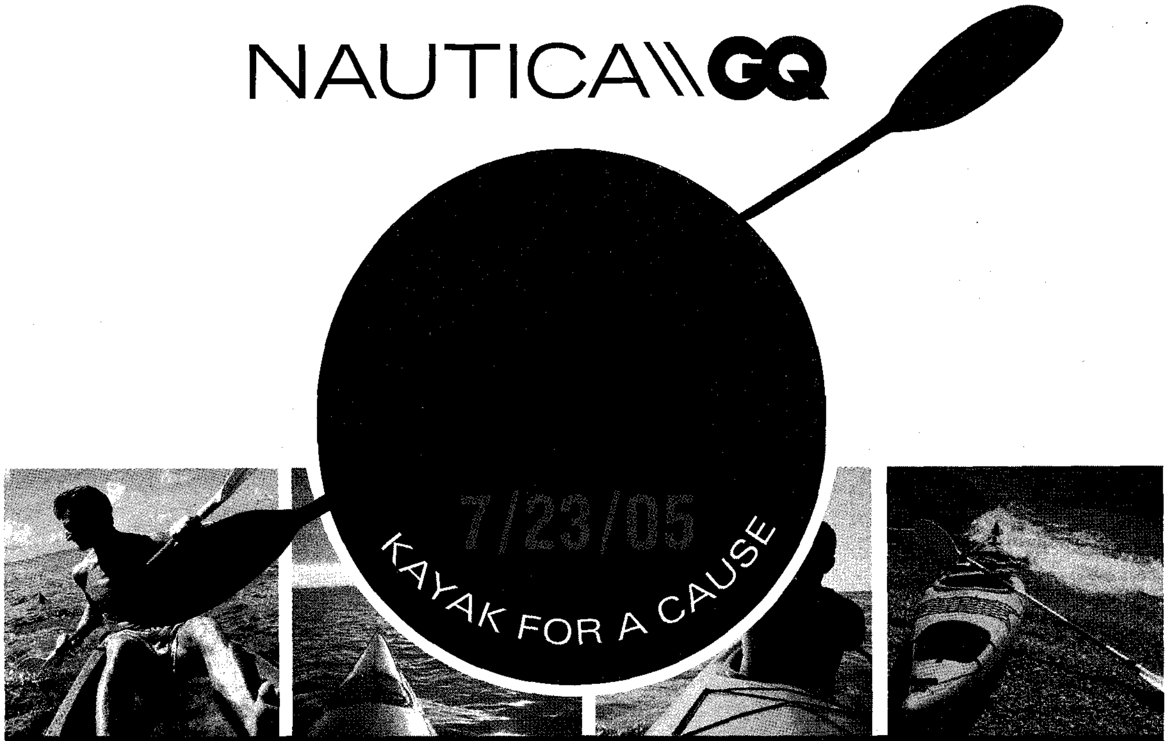

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twenties and early thirties. Paul Hindemith, Kurt Weill, Ernst Toch, and Stefan Wolpe seized upon the phonograph not merely as a means for preserving and distributing music but as a way of making it. Wolpe was the first to take the plunge; at a Dada concert in 1920, he put eight phonographs on a stage and had them play parts of Beethoven's Fifth at different speeds. Weill wrote an interlude for solo record-player—playing "Tango Angèle," his first "hit"—in the au-courant 1927 opera "The Tsar Has Himself Photographed." Hindemith and Toch experimented with performances involving phonographs; fragmentary evidence of their legendary 1930 Gramophone Concert can be found on Katz's CD, and it's some of the craziest damn stuff you'll ever hear. We are only a step or two away from the electronic avant-garde of John Cage, whose "Imaginary Landscape No. 1," for piano, cymbals, and variable-speed turntables, dates from 1939. It turns out that the teen-age Cage attended the Gramophone Concert during a summer break from school.

With the arrival of magnetic tape, the relationship between performer and medium became ever more complex. German engineers perfected the magnetic tape recorder, or Magnetophon, during the Second World War. Late one night, an audio expert turned serviceman named Jack Mullin was monitoring German radio when he noticed that an overnight orchestral broadcast was astonishingly clear: it sounded "live," yet not even at Hitler's whim could the orchestra have been playing Bruckner in the middle of the night. After the war was over, Mullin tracked down a Magnetophon and brought it to America. He demonstrated it to Bing Crosby, who used it to tape his broadcasts in advance. Crosby was a pioneer of perhaps the most famous of all technological effects, the croon. Magnetic tape meant that Bing could practically whisper into the microphone and still be heard across America; a marked drop-off in surface noise meant that vocal murmurs could register as vividly as Louis Armstrong's pealing trumpet.

Magnetic tape also meant that performers could invent their own reality in the studio. Errors could be corrected by splicing together bits of different takes. In the sixties, the Beatles and the Beach Boys, following in the wake of electronic compositions by Cage and Stockhausen, began constructing intricate studio soundscapes that they never could have replicated onstage; even Glenn Gould would have had trouble executing the mechanically accelerated keyboard solo in "In My Life." The great rock debate about authenticity began. Were the Beatles pushing the art forward by reinventing it in the studio? Or were they losing touch with the earthy intelligence of folk, blues, and rock traditions? Bob Dylan stood at a craggy opposite extreme, turning out records in a few days' time and avoiding any vocal overdubs until "Blood on the Tracks," the fourteenth record of his career. Yet frills-free, "lo-fi" recording has no special claim on musical truth; indeed, it easily becomes another phonograph effect, the effect of no effect. Even Dylan cannot escape the fictions of the medium, as he well knows: "I'm gazing out the window / Of the St. James Hotel / And I know no one can sing the blues / Like Blind Willie McTell."

JUST THIS

When I think of the patience I have had
back in the dark before I remember
or knew it was night until the light came
all at once at the speed it was born to
with all the time in the world to fly through
not concerned about ever arriving
and then the gathering of the first stars
unhurried in their flowering spaces
and far into the story the planets
cooling slowly and the ages of rain
then the seas starting to bear memory
the gaze of the first cell at its waking
how did this haste begin this little time
at any time this reading by lightning
scarcely a word this nothing this heaven

—*W. S. Merwin*

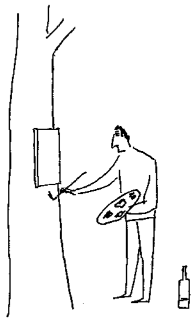
In the nineteen-eighties, as Dutch and Japanese engineers introduced digital recording in the CD format, the saga of the phonograph experienced a final twist. Katz, in the last chapters of his book, delights in following the winding path from Germany in the nineteen-twenties to the South Bronx in the nineteen-seventies, where the turntable became an instrument once again. D.j.s like Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash used turntables to create a hurtling collage of phonograph effects—loops, breaks, beats, scratches. The silently observing machine was shoved into the middle of the party. It was assumed at first that this recording-driven music could never be recorded itself: the art of the d.j. was all about fast moves over long duration, stamina and virtuosity combined. As Jeff Chang notes in his new book "Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation" (St. Martin's; $27.95), serious young d.j.s like Chuck D, on Long Island, laughed when a resourceful record company put out a rap novelty single called "Rapper's Delight." How could a single record do justice to those endless parties in the Bronx where, in a multimedia rage of beats, tunes, raps, dances, and spray-painted images, kids managed to forget for a while that their neighborhood had become a smoldering ruin? The record labels found a way, of course, and a monster industry was born. Nowadays, hip-hop fans are apt to claim that live shows are dead experiences, messy reënactments of pristine studio creations.

Recording has the unsettling power to transform any kind of music, no matter how unruly or how sublime, into a collectible object, which becomes décor for the lonely modern soul. It thrives on the buzz of the new, but it also breeds nostalgia, a state of melancholy remembrance and, with that, indifference to the present; you can start to feel nostalgic for the opening riff of a new favorite song even before you reach the end. Thomas Mann described the phonograph's ambiguous enchantments in the "Fullness of Harmony" chapter of "The Magic Mountain," published in 1924. When a deluxe gramophone arrives at the Berghof sanitarium, it sends mixed messages to the young man who operates it. At times it sings "a new word of love" (shades of Robert Johnson's "Phonograph Blues"), at times it exudes "sympathy for death." At the end of the novel, the hero goes marching toward an inferno of trench warfare, obliviously chanting the Schubert tune that the gramophone taught him. These days, he'd be rapping.

Throughout the twentieth century, classical musicians and listeners together indulged the fantasy that they were living outside the technological realm. They cultivated an atmosphere of timelessness, of detachment from the ordinary world. Perhaps it's no accident that concert dress stopped evolving right about the time that Edison's cylinder came in: performers wished to prolong forever those last golden hours of the aristocratic age. Recording was well liked for its revenue-generating potential, but musicians preferred to think of it as a means of transcribing in the most literal manner the centuries-old classical performance tradition. With scattered exceptions—Weimar-era experimenters, postwar electronic composers, mavericks like Glenn Gould and the producer John Culshaw—musicians avoided the hey-let's-try-this spirit that defined pop recording from the start. As Symes points out, classical releases were prized for their unadorned realism. Recordings were supposed to deny the fact that they were recordings. That process involved, paradoxically, considerable artifice. Overdubbing, patching, knob-twiddling, and even digital effects such as "pitch correction" are as common in the classical studio as in pop. The phenomenon of the dummy star, who has a hard time replicating onstage what he or she purports to do on record, is not unheard of.

Robert Philip, in "Performing Music in the Age of Recording," points out that the vaunted transparency of classical recording is often a micromanaged illusion, and then goes further; he suggests that technology fundamentally altered the tradition that it was intended to preserve. Violin vibrato, as discussed in Mark Katz's book, is but one example of a phonograph effect in classical performance. Philip shows how every instrument in the orchestra acquired a standard profile. Listening to records became a kind of mirror stage through which musicians confronted their "true" selves. "Musicians who first heard their own recordings in the early years of the twentieth century were often taken aback by what they heard, suddenly being made aware of inaccuracies and mannerisms they had not suspected," Philip writes. As they adjusted their playing, they entered into a complex process that Katz calls a "feedback loop." Feedback is what happens when an electric-guitar player gets too close to an amp and the amp starts squealing. Feedback in classical performance is the sound of musicians desperately trying to embody the superior self they glimpsed in the mirror and, potentially, turning themselves into robots in the process.

Philip begins his book with a riveting description of concerts at the turn of the last century. "Freedom from disaster was the standard for a good concert," he writes. Rehearsals were brief, mishaps routine. Precision was not a universal value. Pianists rolled chords instead of playing them at one stroke. String players slid expressively from one note to the next—portamento, the style was called—in imitation of the slide of the voice. And the instruments themselves sounded different, depending on the nationality of the player. French bassoons had a reedy, pungent tone, quite unlike the rounded timbre of German bassoons. French flutists, by contrast, used more vibrato than their German and English counterparts, creating a warmer, mellower aura. American orchestral culture, which brought together immigrant musicians from all countries, began to erode the differences, and recordings canonized the emergent standard practice. Whatever style sounded cleanest on the medium—in these cases, German bassoons and French flutes—became the gold standard that players in conservatories copied. Young virtuosos today may have recognizable idiosyncrasies, but their playing seldom indicates that they came from any particular place or emerged from any particular tradition.



Archival reissues give tantalizing glimpses of the world as it was. Philip notes that in a 1912 performance the great Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe "sways either side of the beat, while the piano maintains an even rhythm." In disks by the Bohemian Quartet, he says, "each player is functioning as an individual," reacting with seeming spontaneity to the personalities of the others. Edward Elgar's recordings of his Second Symphony and Cello Concerto, from 1927 and 1928, respectively, are practically explosive in impact, destroying all stereotypes of the composer as a staid Victorian gentleman. No modern orchestra would dare to play as the Londoners played for Elgar: phrases precipitously step over one another, tempos constantly change underfoot, rough attacks punch the clean surface. The biographical evidence suggests that this borderline-chaotic style of performance was exactly what Elgar wanted. "All sorts of things which other conductors carefully foster, he seems to leave to take their chance," a critic observed. Modern recordings of Elgar are so different in sound and spirit that they seem to document a different kind of music altogether. The symphonies have turned into monumental processional rituals, along the lines of the symphonies of Bruckner, or at least the version of Bruckner that conductors now give us.

All those lost tics and traits—swaying on either side of the beat, sliding between notes, breaking chords into arpeggios, members of a quartet going every which way—are alike in bringing out the distinct voices of the players, not to mention the mere fact that they are fallible humans. Philip writes, "If you hear the Royal Albert Hall

Orchestra sliding, you may or may not like it, but you cannot be unaware of the physical process of playing." Most modern performance tends to erase all evidence of the work that goes into playing: virtuosity is defined as effortlessness. One often-quoted ideal is to "disappear behind the music." But when precision is divorced from emotion it can become anti-musical, inhuman, repulsive.

Is there any escape from the "feedback loop"? Philip, having blamed recordings for a multitude of sins, ends by saying that they might be able to come to the rescue. By studying artifacts from the dawn of the century, musicians might recapture what has gone missing from the perfectionist style. They can rebel against the letter of the score in pursuit of its spirit. But there are enormous psychic barriers in the way of such a shift: performers will have to be unafraid of indulging mannerisms that will sound sloppy to some ears, of committing what will sound like mistakes. They will have to defy the hyper-competitive conservatory culture in which they came of age, and also the hyper-professionalized culture of the ensembles in which they find work.

In at least one area, though, performance style has undergone a sea change. Early music has long had the reputation of being the most pedantically "correct" subculture in classical music; Philip exposes its contradictions in one chapter of his book. But the more dynamic Renaissance and Baroque specialists—Jordi Savall, Andrew Manze, the Venice Baroque Orchestra, Il Giardino Armonico, William Christie's Les Arts Florissants—are exercising all the freedoms that Philip misses in modern performance: they execute some notes cleanly and others roughly, they weave around the beat instead of staying right on top of it, they slide from note to note when they are so moved. As a result, the music feels liberated, and audiences tend to respond in kind, with yelps of joy.

Philip, at the end of his masterly thesis, is left with an uncertainty. No matter how much evidence he accumulates, he can't quite prove that classical playing became standardized because the phonograph demanded it. Records cannot be entirely to blame, he admits: otherwise, similar patterns would surface in popular music, which, whatever its problems, has never lacked for spontaneity. The urge toward precision was already well under way in the late nineteenth century, when Hans von Bülow's Meiningen orchestra was celebrated as the best-rehearsed of its time, and when the big new orchestras of America, the Boston Symphony first and foremost, astonished European visitors like Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler with the discipline of their playing. Other technologies that preceded the phonograph also changed how people played and listened. Those who got to know music on a well-tuned piano began to expect the same from an orchestra. The sonic wonders of Boston's Symphony Hall—the first hall whose acoustics were scientifically designed—placed a golden frame around the music, and the orchestra had to measure up. Most of all, classical music in America suffered from being a reproduction itself, an immaculate copy of European tradition. We've been listening to the same record for a century and a half.

Twenty years ago, the American composer Benjamin Boretz wrote, "In music, as in everything, the disappearing moment of experience is the firmest reality." The paradox of recording is that it can preserve forever those disappearing moments of sound but never the spark of humanity that generates them. This is a paradox common to technological existence: everything gets a little easier and a little less real. Then again, the reigning unreality of the electronic sphere can set us up for a new kind of ecstasy, once we unplug ourselves from our gadgets and expose ourselves to the risk of live performance. Recently at Carnegie Hall, Gidon Kremer and the Baltimore Symphony played Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto, and, over and above the physical power of Kremer's playing—his tone ran the gamut from the gnawingly raw to the angelically pure—the performance offered the shock of the real: on an average, bustling New York night, Shostakovich bore down on the audience like a phantom train.

In 1964, Glenn Gould made a famous decision to renounce live performance. In an essay published two years later, "The Prospects of Recording," he predicted that the concert would eventually die out, to be replaced by a purely electronic music culture. He may still be proved right. For now, live performance clings to life, and, in tandem, the classical-music tradition that could hardly exist without it. As the years go by, Gould's line of argument, which served to explain his decision to abandon the concert stage, seems ever more misguided and dangerous. Gould praised recordings for their vast archival possibilities, for their ability to supply on demand a bassoon sonata by Hindemith or a motet by Buxtehude. He gloried in the extraordinary interpretive control that studio conditions allowed him. He took it for granted that the taste for Buxtehude motets or for surprising new approaches to Bach could survive the death of the concert—that somehow new electronic avenues could be found to spread the word about old and unusual music. Gould's thesis is annulled by cold statistics: classical-record sales have plunged, while concert attendance is anxiously holding steady. Ironically, Gould himself remains, posthumously, one of the last blockbuster classical recording artists: Sony Classical's recent rerelease of his two interpretations of Bach's Goldberg Variations sold two hundred thousand copies. That's surely not what Gould had in mind for the future of the medium.

A few months after Gould published his essay, the Beatles, in a presumably unrelated development, played their last live show, in San Francisco. They spent the rest of their short career working in the recording studio. They proved, as did Gould, that the studio breeds startlingly original ideas; they also proved, as did Gould, that it breeds a certain kind of madness. I'll take "Rubber Soul" over "Sgt. Pepper's," and Gould's 1955 Goldbergs over his 1981 version, because the first recording in each pair is the more robust, the more generous, the more casually sublime. The fact that the Beatles broke up three years after they disappeared into the studio, and the fact that Gould died in strange psychic shape at the age of fifty, may tell us all we need to know about the seductions and sorrows of the art of recording. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Conduct Under Fire, *by John A. Glusman (Viking; $29.95).* When the Philippines fell to the Japanese, in 1942, thousands of G.I.s were captured. Many were, a military doctor said, "patients rather than prisoners"—hungry and sick with malaria and dysentery after weeks under siege at Bataan and Corregidor. Glusman tells the story of four Navy doctors among the P.O.W.s—one of them his father—who spent the next three and a half years working, stealing food, and playing bridge in Japanese prison camps. The doctors, technically noncombatants, were allowed to treat their fellow-P.O.W.s, and fought to get the medicine and other supplies they needed, usually without success. By the end of the war, their patients were starving to death; Glusman shows that survival depended on luck, as when the four are separated and one is shipped on a Japanese transport through a field of Allied submarines.

Marriage: A History, *by Stephanie Coontz (Viking; $25.95).* Coontz confirms what many traditionalists have claimed: the fifties were the Golden Age of marriage. She also confirms what many progressives have claimed: the conditions that made the Golden Age possible were so fragile that they could not endure. Rising educational levels for women made it impossible to confine feminine ambition to ever more spotless floors, and the postwar boom made single-earner households less viable. More broadly, Coontz stresses the historical specificity of marriage based on love, tracing it from its emergence in Western Europe some two hundred years ago to modern manifestations like single-sex marriages and stay-at-home dads. Less successful are her attempts to provide an anthropology of spousal strategies across cultures. Current divorce statistics notwithstanding, Coontz sees marriage as an infinitely adaptable human achievement.

Out of Eden, *by Alan Burdick (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* When alien species are introduced into new territories, they often imperil ecosystems, threatening native species with extinction. The ecology of invasion is, in consequence, a burgeoning field, and Burdick's survey follows herpetologists to the jungles of Guam, where they track the infamous brown tree snake, which arrived around 1949 and decimated the local bird population. He explores underground lava tubes with an entomologist studying the waning song of insect plant-hoppers; and he helps strain ballast water from tankers in San Francisco Bay, where non-native zooplankton are elbowing their way into the food chain. The long spans of evolutionary history and the speed of change make for some dizzying contrasts. Ninety per cent of Hawaii's native species are found nowhere else on earth, and the honeycreeper, a songbird currently depleted by avian malaria, first inhabited islands in the archipelago that have long since vanished into the sea.

The Face of a Naked Lady, *by Michael Rips (Houghton Mifflin; $24).* Going through his late father's effects, Rips discovered a series of nude paintings of a woman he'd never met. This memoir is ostensibly about his attempt to find her but devolves into a beautiful, if scattered, portrait of the rural Midwest where he grew up, a story full of extravagant personalities and adorned with occasional philosophical musings. Central to it all is the lingering presence of his father, an enigmatic figure who was reared in a brothel owned by his grandparents, and who tended to communicate with his son largely through analogies and metaphors. Gradually, the seemingly discrete anecdotes in Rips's book, like those told to him by his father, coalesce into something of moral significance. Of a late encounter with his father, he writes, "I considered, for the first time, the possibility that buried in his stories was a message for me."

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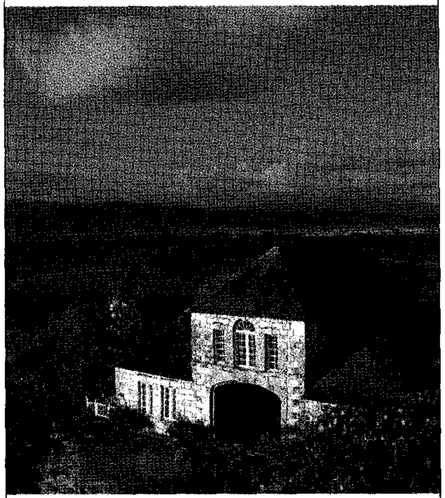

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DANCING

PERSONAL MATTERS

Five premières at New York City Ballet.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Like a poker player laying down a royal flush, New York City Ballet, at its spring gala, on May 4th, staged five ballets new to the company. What they added up to, though, was maybe a pair of sixes. Several of the ballets were just brief pas de deux, made by dancers in the company: Benjamin Millepied, Edwaard Liang, and Albert Evans. Millepied's piece, "Double Aria," to music by Daniel Ott, was a taffy pull for two of the company's handsomest, most long-limbed dancers, Maria Kowroski and Ask la Cour. Kowroski doubled over backward; she danced upside down; she spiralled down la Cour's leg like a snake on a stick. None of this seemed to signify much—the piece was basically an update of the "acrobatic adagios" that bespangled couples used to do on music-hall programs—but it was impressive-looking. Liang's "Distant Cries" was a darker business, full of grabbings and haulings that seemed all the ruder by contrast with the dainty Albinoni score. But, unlike Millepied's piece, "Distant Cries" may have actually been saying something. It was commissioned by the N.Y.C.B. veteran Peter Boal for his own small company earlier this year. Boal danced it here, as he did there, with Wendy Whelan. At the end, Whelan opened her mouth wide, as if to scream, and then put her hand over her mouth. Boal is retiring from N.Y.C.B. on June 5th (he will take over Pacific Northwest Ballet, in Seattle), and perhaps "Distant Cries" was an expression of sorrow over the loss of him. It didn't look elegiac, though; it looked ferocious, and one was glad, finally, to see Boal bare his teeth. For twenty-two years, at City Ballet, he has been confined to roles of quiet purity. He filled that bill beautifully, but he may be ready for new territory.

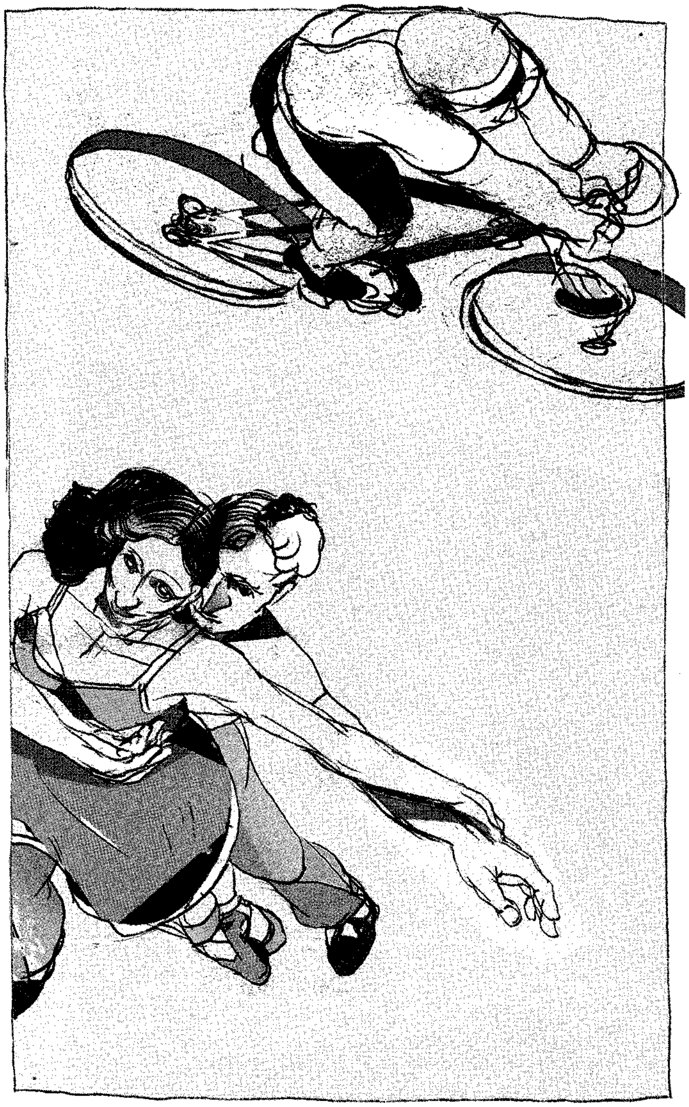
Albert Evans's "Broken Promise," to a score by Mathew Fuerst, a doctoral student at Juilliard, was the least "finished" of the new works. The piece is what Evans did last year at the New York Choreographic Institute, N.Y.C.B.'s ballet-making workshop, and you can see in it simple beginner's problems, of the how-do-we-get-from-here-to-there variety. But, like Liang's piece, it was very interesting for its cross-type casting—in this case, of Ashley Bouder. Bouder is City Ballet's Miss Can-Do. Every company has one: the young woman who can turn more turns, stop on more dimes, than anyone else. Like others of the type, Bouder often seems too caught up in correctness. Every step is smack on the beat; every move is made with the same force: bang, bang, bang. I don't mean to sniff at Bouder's technical expertise. That quality is no longer widespread at N.Y.C.B., and her attention to it is most welcome. But now she needs to go to a new place: phrasing, pacing, nuance—adulthood, as it were. And that is the opportunity that Evans gave her in "Broken Promise," by putting her in an adagio role, with a big, capable partner, Stephen Hanna. It was quite a surprise to see that eager, muscly little torso of hers accommodate itself to long, sostenuto phrases. Evans tactfully gave her the chance to do some of her regular stuff—front kicks so high that she seemed to smack her face, a flying leap onto Hanna's chest, where she landed with an audible thud (Hanna should get a bonus)—but the main fact of this piece was that Bouder, in a low-cut leotard, did a dance full of long lifts and arabesques, things she could not have done by herself. That is, she was eroticized and glamorized. At the end, she sat down on the floor with Hanna and cuddled with him companionably, as if to say, "Thanks, I needed you."

In addition, we got a new ballet, as we do every season, by Peter Martins, the company's director. This was "Tālā Gaisma," to a score by the Latvian composer Pēteris Vasks, and it showed everything that we now expect from Martins: his interest in modern music; his cold competence; his hyperingenious partnering; his allusions to the works of his predecessor, Balanchine; and what seems to be his mixed feelings about women. Here, the Balanchine reference was to "Apollo," in which the young god danced with three muses, the patronesses of epic poetry, mime, and dance. In "Tālā Gaisma," the male lead, Jock Soto, again dances with three women, the muses, if I am not mistaken, of female sexuality (Sofiane Sylve), female menace (Miranda Weese), and female dependency (Darci Kistler, Martins's wife). Soto partners Sylve with two hands between her thighs. (I have never seen this before in a ballet.) Weese is made into a succubus, Kistler into a pleading pest, hanging on to Soto, getting her hair tangled up in his hands. Soto finally fights his way free, lowering these harridans onto the floor, where they lie supine, immobilized. As the lights come down, he stands over them, looking as if he needed a drink.

Press-wise, the big deal of the season was Christopher Wheeldon's "American in Paris." Wheeldon, N.Y.C.B.'s thirty-two-year-old resident choreographer, is probably the most looked-to ballet master in the United States today. When you add to that fact the fame of Gershwin's score, and of the movie that Vincente Minnelli made out of it, with Gene Kelly tearing around Paris against sets adapted from van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec—and when you consider, too, that Wheeldon's sets were being done by Adrianne Lobel, the scenographic magician of so many Peter Sellars and Mark Morris shows—you have something that the advance-piece writers could go to town on. Curiously, though, Wheeldon seemed to try to calm them down. He told Sylviane Gold, of the *Times*, that he chose the Gershwin score because it would sell tickets. "As a resident choreographer at the company," he said, "part of my responsibility is to help build a balanced repertoire, instead of just having my own kind of inner creative agenda." In other words, "Don't get your hopes up. I'm just doing an assignment."

It came out fine. Lobel's backdrops were spectacular, a Cubist answer to

Minnelli's Post-Impressionists. The score was that score, so jaunty and elegant. The story was similar to the movie's—an American painter in love with a French gamine—and Damian Woetzel, N.Y.C.B.'s resident cool cat, was a worthy successor to Kelly, as the sweet-faced Jenifer Ringer was to Leslie Caron. The stage pullulated with Parisian "types": gendarmes, street toughs, ladies in couture, plus a bicyclist tooling through, apparently looking for the Tour de France. There was a cute jazz solo for Carla Körbes, the company's Brazilian bombshell. And, as the score required, there were two tender duets for Woetzel and Ringer. It was all very nice, and it looked exactly like what Wheeldon said it would be, a box-office thing, with his "own kind of inner creative agenda" laid aside.


Press-wise, the big deal of the season was "American in Paris."

Actually, an artist can never wholly lay aside his creative agenda. It's like laying aside your personality. And so, in "American in Paris," we did see Wheeldon's two great choreographic gifts. First, his knack for ensemble work. Those Gay Paree types got repetitive after a while; nevertheless, it was wonderful to see how Wheeldon orchestrated their comings and goings, in a way that was both readable and exciting. This is a fundamental choreographic gift, mastery of the stage space, and Wheeldon has had it from the start. His second, indispensable virtue is his feeling for the pas de deux. You can bend it this way and that, but the male-female duet is still the center of ballet, and it is almost always central to a Wheeldon ballet. He cares about it, his heart is in it, and even in this rather shallow ballet—in which, by the way, the guy doesn't get the girl—the pas de deux were occasionally piercing, with Ringer caught in little spread-legged lifts, as if she were yielding and fleeing at the same time, and too young to know that she shouldn't open her legs.

Those are the blessings that Wheeldon can't help but show, even when he's doing what he regards as a task. But if you look at his prior work and especially at the ballet that he made for the company last season, "After the Rain," you see them in a purer state. "After the Rain" is in two parts, a rare form in ballet. It's as if Wheeldon frankly decided that he would plumb his gift for ensemble work in the first part and his gift for the pas de deux in the second, and call it a night. What a night! Above all, what a pas de deux. Jock Soto came out bare-chested; Wendy Whelan appeared in just a pink leotard and soft shoes (no tights, no point shoes, no presentationalism). Then they went through a series of maneuvers that were not, I think, the representation of a relationship but maybe what one might remember on one's deathbed about a relationship. She crawls between his legs; he lifts her in an awkward pose, and she hangs there. She embraces his head; then she puts her hands down behind her back, outlining the cleavage of her buttocks. They do prettier things, too, but the whole force of the duet is its note of privacy. They don't seem to know we're there. Meanwhile, the voice of the solo violin (playing Arvo Pärt's "Spiegel im Spiegel") rises from the pit, and its loneliness and exposure magnify theirs. This is not the kind of thing we normally see at City Ballet today. It is the real thing.

The dancers clearly know this, and feel honored, not just by Wheeldon's ballets but by any ballet that seems to care for them in a special way. About seven years ago, Whelan, turning thirty, changed before our eyes. She had been a dry, hypercorrect performer. "I work hard," her dancing seemed to say. Then, suddenly, she relaxed, became witty, wise. In interviews, she gave various reasons for this development, but it was surely abetted by Wheeldon, with whom she began working soon afterward. She's not the only one he has affected. He has softened that cannonball Alexandra Ansanelli. He has woken up that sleeping beauty Maria Kowroski. But the best example this season was Jenifer Ringer. A feisty thing when she was young, Ringer these days has been putting in a lot of thin performances. But a week after her début in "American in Paris" she did Balanchine's "Allegro Brillante" as if she were being assumed into Heaven. New roles, serious roles—roles that the dancers can imagine are about them—mean everything to a company. Wheeldon, in his ballets, is telling his colleagues that they are artists, souls. Not just at N.Y.C.B., but throughout ballet in this country, nothing is more desperately needed. ◆

THE THEATRE

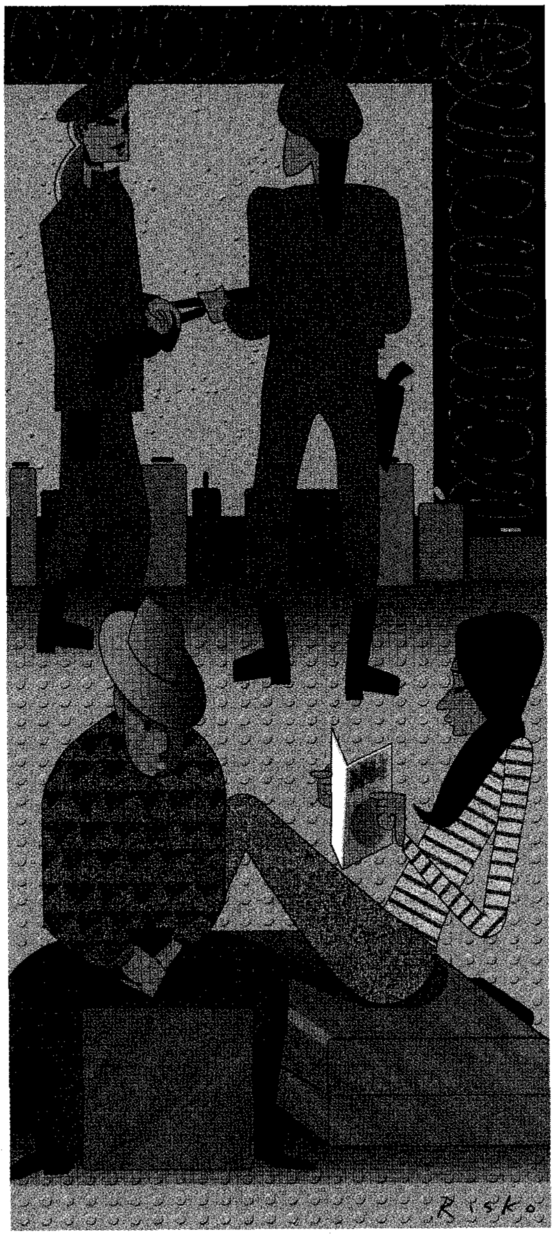
UNMAKING THE WORLD

Three plays on human bondage.

BY JOHN LAHR

Pain unmakes the world. A simple toothache is enough to wreck your thinking. Pain somehow renders you inarticulate; in fact, it makes words impossible. Now let's talk about terror. As Hilaire Belloc said, terror causes a sudden "paralysis of the soul": the mind is destabilized; it resists complexity, becomes prone to misjudgments. A passion for life is replaced by a passion for ignorance. This is the chilly, demoralized internal climate that the Siberian brothers Oleg and Vladimir Presnyakov try to capture in their smart, saturnine meditation "Terrorism" (crisply directed by Will Frears, at the Clurman/Theatre Row). The play, which was written a year before September 11, 2001, has come to New York via the Moscow Art Theatre and London's Royal Court—a trajectory that announces both its literary pedigree and a certain stately pace.

In David Korins's stark set, two angular gray concrete slabs topped with barbed wire conjure an airport's tarmac. As the audience members take their seats, a crowd of travellers are already onstage slumped in various postures of resignation, amid their jettisoned baggage—indefinitely barred from the terminal by a bomb scare—while armed soldiers patrol around them. The passengers' entropy is terror's accomplishment: the terrorist's ambition is not only to kill people but, through the threat of absurd death, to subvert the body politic, to claim and maim the public imagination. This idea—the Brothers P. studied psychology and philology at university—is the play's starting point: almost immediately, a hotheaded passenger is demanding to know why his flight has been cancelled. "So where's the smoke? The splinters? Ruins? Where are they?" he mocks, vowing to return home rather than wait in this arid purgatory. Even though it seems that there was no bomb, a calmer passenger points out, "It's already blown up. . . . It's all inside. Inside all these people sitting here right now—and the ones stopping us from going in. . . . They were torn away from something, from their own lives . . . made to worry, panic, even if they are pretending that they're not scared."



Airline passengers are grounded in "Terrorism."

In a world tipped upside down by terror, suspicion erodes the bonds between people and undermines the community. The characters here, who are never named, are unhappy, confused, deracinated, and cruel. The play is structured as a sort of existential murder mystery. In the course of six linked scenes, as the sadism of individuals and the group is slowly revealed, the concrete slabs, which at first suggest barriers erected to keep terror *out*, become a metaphor for the impermeable walls of hatred and isolation that keep the terrorized self *in*.

We never see the hotheaded passenger return home; in his absence, however, we watch his wife asking to be strapped to their bed by her lover, who complies, then refuses to untie her. "Now it's for real," he says, before gagging her and falling asleep beside her as the phone rings. Later, in the locker room at a military police station, a couple of cops bully one of their colleagues to the point of tears. "Chemical-weapon attack!" they taunt, throwing powder into the locker where they've trapped him. During the horseplay, we learn that a building has been destroyed by a gas explosion; all that remains is a ghoulish photograph, taken by one of the policemen, of two hands tied to a bedpost.

By rejecting explanation, the Presnyakovs build a sense of paranoia as well as of mystery. In another scene, two old biddies sit on a playground bench watching a little boy on a swing offstage and talking about poisoning their relatives. The boy trains his toy gun's laser beam on the forehead of one of the women—"like a sniper's aiming at you," her friend says, trying to brush the red dot away. It may have been this boy, scampering up the stairs of an apartment block, ringing all the bells, we discover, who accidentally ignited the gas blast. "The explosions, murders, terrorism—it's about something else, way more frightening—this is the beginning of a chain reaction," a policeman says. "Everyone, I mean everyone, is infected."

At the end of the play, the hotheaded passenger is finally in flight, confessing to his fellow-passengers his part in the carnage that has taken place. “Why are you telling us all of this?” one passenger says. “We don’t feel too good, either!” Terror has numbed all the characters. They can’t seem to make meaning or hear it. “What a mess we’re in!” another passenger says. “Deluding ourselves that somebody out there is going to kill us, when actually it turns out we kill ourselves, don’t we? Not all at once, of course, but in slow motion, like a film.” The terrorized, the playwrights seem to imply, become terrorists. From the plane, the hotheaded passenger calls home. The play ends with the sound of a broken connection. “He is waiting for the tone to end and thinking what he will say,” the stage direction reads. “But the tone doesn’t end.” The play leaves the passenger without words, but it leaves the audience full of thought—which is the ultimate act of anti-terrorism.

“Terrorism” ’s style is European; its flatness reflects a willful refusal to entertain—being inspired to think at the theatre is, for a Continental audience, entertainment enough. The subject of Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros’s sharp, powerful play “The Argument” (well directed by Maria Mileaf, at the Vineyard) is, to borrow the British politician Hugh Gaitskell’s phrase, “the subtle terrorism of words,” but this version of terrorism is served up with a dose of distinctly American exhilaration. By the end of this adroitly executed show, another woman will have been bound, hand and foot, by a man, but not before the act of sadism has been decoyed by good will.

As the play opens, the two main characters push through the front door of a modern apartment, locked in a wild embrace. Sophie (Melissa Leo), a diminutive forty-two-year-old painter, hangs on the hulking frame of a forty-nine-year-old stockbroker named Phillip (Jay O. Sanders) like a buoy on a yacht. They try to dock on the kitchen counter, then on a lounge chair, and finally maneuver themselves onto the bed. From this light and lively fling between two strangers, Gersten-Vassilaros cunningly proceeds to the safe harbor of love and cohabitation. Even the act of buying a refrigerator is filled with conjugal wonder for the new lovers. “See this?” Sophie says, opening a drawer. “They call this a ‘crisper.’ ”

Sophie’s eventual pregnancy, however, brings the couple up against their own tyrannical desires. Phillip, who is a childless divorcé, sees this as the consolidation of their love and his last chance to be a father; Sophie, who is afraid of what will happen to her work, prefers the miracle of artistic creation to the miracle of procreation. “A child . . . is like a farm. Day in, day out. Life on a working farm,” she tells Phillip, as she insists on the right to control her own body. The characters struggle to listen to each other, to understand, to be fair. They are both right and both wrong. In a witty, well-observed scene, the couple even go to a mediator (John Rothman), and the session brings them to loggerheads. Sanders and Leo negotiate the choppy waters of love and fury with terrific panache. When Sophie finally insists on an abortion, Phillip hides her wallet, ties her up, and barricades the door with the totem of their union, the refrigerator. “Let’s not do this, let’s not make hurting each other impossible to resist,” he says, unable to stop himself. A torrent of abuse rains down from both sides—“weakling,” “selfish,” “liar,” “cripple.” By the end of the play, the terrorist in Phillip has killed forever the couple’s ideal of happiness. Of all the losses they fight over, the greatest of all is the loss of their illusions.

The punishing standoff between Sophie and Phillip—two solitaries, as it turns out—reminded me of Tennessee Williams’s words about dying, the words that end Linda Marlowe’s compelling one-woman show “Mortal Ladies Possessed” (directed by Stuart Mullins, at 59East59): “All at once I am a fountain. There is a scarlet ocean of blood at my lips, and nobody understands it.” Marlowe, who is in the first division of British actresses, has a brave, nervy quality; in a collage of scenes from several Williams short stories, she expertly dissects the playwright’s hysterical women. The show’s patchwork construction inevitably lacks penetration but not poignancy and poetry. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

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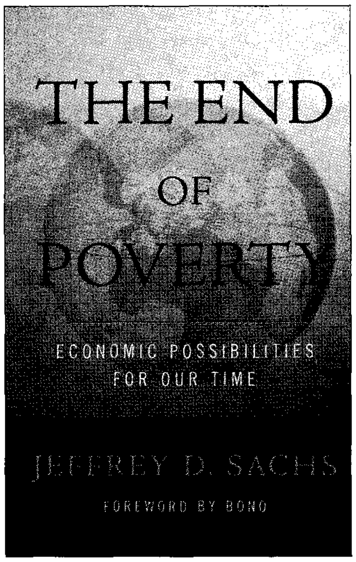

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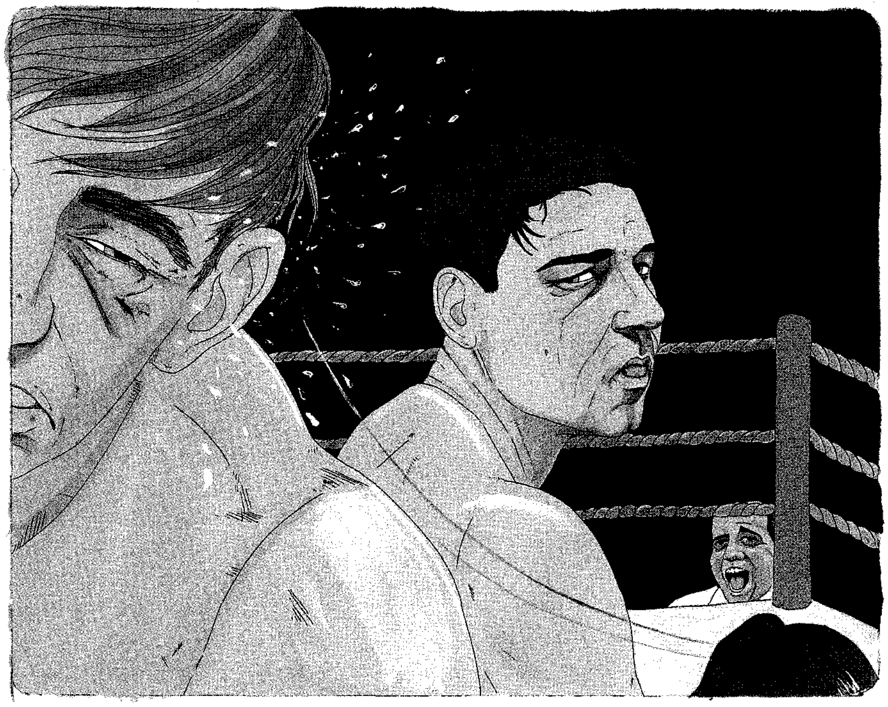
THE CURRENT CINEMA

LOOKING FOR HEROES

"Cinderella Man" and "The White Diamond."

BY ANTHONY LANE

This is the story of James J. Braddock. Nice guy, born 1905, family man; takes up boxing, prospers, loses his touch; suffers in the Great Depression, breaks a hand, quits the ring; gets another chance, wins from nowhere, rises again, and winds up as Heavyweight Champion of the World; dies in 1974. It sounds like something out of a movie.



Russell Crowe (center) as James J. Braddock, and Paul Giamatti (right) as Joe Gould.

To be precise, it sounds like something out of a Ron Howard movie, and that is what it has now become. "Cinderella Man" is a faithful recounting of the legend, starring Russell Crowe as Braddock, with Renée Zellweger as his faithful wife, Mae, and Paul Giamatti as his faithful coach, Joe Gould. There's so much faith charging around in this picture that it could break your nose.

We start in 1929, with a win, and the sight of Braddock, flush with cash, returning to his warm New Jersey home. Skip ahead four years, and a handheld camera pokes around a dour basement apartment; for a moment, you imagine that Braddock has blown his gifts on adultery or booze, succumbing to the mob of demons that—if boxing films are to be believed—can hardly wait to pounce on the professional aggressor. But no: the Braddocks have simply felt the pinch of the age. Mae waters the milk for their three children; when one of them steals a salami from a butcher, his father marches him straight back to the shop. You could argue, watching him chide the solemn kid, that Braddock is too good to be true, but Howard and his writers, Cliff Hollingsworth and Akiva Goldsman, are right to paint their hero as a man of the people, for that was the thrust of his appeal. The highlight of "Cinderella Man" is not the championship slugfest against Max Baer (Craig Bierko) in 1935, but a smaller, one-off bout against Corn Griffin (Art Binkowski) the previous year. Braddock is entered late for the contest, less as an underdog than as a sacrificial offering, and when he turns it around the crowd—Braddocks to a man—begins to sniff a hero. Later, we see thirty-five thousand people go silent for Braddock's entrance to the title fight, as if he were more bishop than boxer. All of which sets a challenge, of the kind that Chaplin used to relish: how do you make an adventure out of a sermon?

The answer is casting. "Cinderella Man" is every bit as efficient in its management of our emotions as Howard's "Apollo 13," and a godsend to anybody who yearns for cinema to be a bringer of good tidings. It runs roughly two and a half hours, and the intensity spikes with every fight; without Russell Crowe and Paul Giamatti, however, it would be flat on the canvas. They make it seem a better and more bristling film than it actually is. On paper, Braddock is a rageless bull: an honest joe, tragedy-free, whose misfortune was not of his own making. Politicians of every stripe will love this movie (how impotent they must have felt before "Raging Bull" or "Million Dollar Baby," rife with insoluble woes), because it dramatizes the momentum of self-will, yet Crowe refuses to play the overdog. Even as Braddock is hoisted high on men's shoulders, you wonder if Howard hired a smile wrangler to approach the actor with a monkey wrench and jack up the corners of his mouth. What a lonely performer Crowe seems; his characters find it so hard and unnatural to make friends that, when they do—as in "Gladiator," "Master and Commander," and now here—you feel stirred and relieved. And, when the friend in question is Joe Gould, you lie back and enjoy.

There is no plummer part than a boxing coach, and Paul Giamatti digs in. Away with the filleted slouch and the nasal whine of "American Splendor" and "Sideways"; back go the shoulders, on goes the gray plaid suit. Even the face has fleshed out, and he gets a fat cigar to stick in the middle of it. Observe him closely during his big, Runyon-like pitch to Jimmy Johnston (Bruce McGill), the godfather of boxing promotion, and you'll see the eyes and hands at full comic tilt, right down to the infinitesimal sign of the cross as Joe says, "God forbid." There may be better ways to walk away with a picture, but none of them spring to mind. Such nimbleness is all the more entertaining because of the hulks who trudge and pummel their way through the rest of the movie, ranging from Art Binkowski, whose Griffin is basically a wall of meat in green shorts, to Craig Bierko, whose lazy, mid-fight smirk introduces us to the concept of the homicidal dandy. (Indeed, two of Baer's opponents really did perish after his assaults.) The punch-throwing, with a side order of flashbulbs, will be nothing new to anybody who followed De Niro and Scorsese in their prime, and the beatings that Braddock takes and dishes out lack the spice of suspense, because we sense, from the start, that things can only get better. What softens "Cinderella Man" is the unstoppable decency of the director, who offers no hint of sexual threat or racial distrust, and only a breath of political unrest; what hardens it is the glower of Russell Crowe, who instinctively grasps the irony of trying to sell a fairy tale on the back of legalized violence—of men in a desperate age, who all but murdered for a living. Cinderella he can handle; it's Prince Charming who sticks in his throat.

How badly does Werner Herzog miss Klaus Kinski? Their heyday together, as director and actor, respectively, began in 1972, with "Aguirre, Wrath of God," and came to a majestic close a decade later, with "Fitzcarraldo." Both those movies were rooted in all but unreachable places, and there is a definite yearning in the air as Herzog's latest film, "The White Diamond," finds him back in the kind of lyrically inhospitable realms that it was once his pleasure to survey. Still, Kinski has been dead for fourteen years, and "The White Diamond" is not a savage historical parable but a gentle, nagging documentary that meanders like a mist.

The destination this time is Guyana, on the northeastern shoulder of South America. In 2004, a British aeronautical engineer named Graham Dorrington went there to fly his new creation: a small airship that could be maneuvered over the roof of the rain forest. It was an anti-Hindenburg—non-flammable, and bearing no more than two passengers at a time. The film attempts to argue the case for the scientific utility of the ship—Dr. Dorrington suggests the delightful pastime of "canopy prospecting," whereby you scout the treetops for curative flora—but we know, in our moviegoing hearts, that Herzog did not throw himself into the jaws of the jungle for this noble purpose. What he responds to, first, is the eccentric loveliness of the ship: not a diamond at all but a bright unfallen teardrop on its side, or perhaps—as it noses serenely around a river bend—a child's drawing of a whale. Second, there is Dr. Dorrington.

The good doctor is not, one feels, as outlandish as Herzog would have him be. His grin has the suddenness of the madly enthusiastic, but he is very far from mad. In short, he is no Klaus Kinski, and what Herzog comes up with, by way of compensation, is an agon. In 1993, Dorrington travelled to Sumatra on a similar project, with an earlier craft and a German cameraman named Dieter Plage. At one point, during a storm, the ship was trapped in a tree; Plage was ejected by the rocking motion and killed. It is a terrible tale, but does it deserve Herzog's wily dramatic approach? He administers hints about the accident, drop by drop, but only late in the film does he allow Dorrington to reveal the full facts. We are meant to shudder at the mystery, at the mining of a deep secret, yet in retrospect the emotions run clear: Dorrington feels both responsible and guilty, as any of us would, and his trip to Guyana is an atonement. Stranger things happen on the subway.

I suspect that Herzog knows this, and that is why he veers away from Dorrington, into the tributaries of subplot. We get a curt scene at a nearby diamond mine; we get a youthful cook, moonwalking to hip-hop near the crumbling rim of a cliff; and we get Mark Anthony, a relaxed local soul, who appears to be in love with his rooster. Herzog has long treasured those who are semi-detached from life, for whom ecstasy is no sweat, and Mark Anthony is a fine recruit to the ranks, yet, even so, "The White Diamond" is most radiant when it glances aside from humanity, from folly and sweetness alike, to stare at the Kaieteur Falls. These are high and thunderous, the color of dirty gold, and behind them is a vast cave where swifts traditionally nest. The penultimate shot catches a blizzard of birds streaming around the curtain of water: an image of quite giddying beauty that recalls the foggy, vertiginous opening of "Aguirre." Werner Herzog may lack heroes, nowadays, who seem adequate to his fierce capacity for wonder. When occasion demands, however, he can still turn the world upside down. ♦

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Volume LXXXI, No. 16, June 6, 2005. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for six combined issues: Jan. 24 & 31, Feb. 14 & 21, June 13 & 20, July 11 & 18, Aug. 8 & 15, Dec. 26 & Jan. 2) by The Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. David Carey, vice-president and publisher; William Li, associate publisher; Ronda Carnegie, advertising director; Gail Day, advertising director; Marie Wolpert, advertising director; Jamie Engel, advertising manager; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; Ilene Danuff, marketing services director; Douglas Chilcott, associate creative services director/promotion; L. Paul Robertson, associate creative services director/events; Rosemary Stanton, advertising business director; Edward Klaris, general counsel. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Steven T. Florio, vice-chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.O.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.F.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

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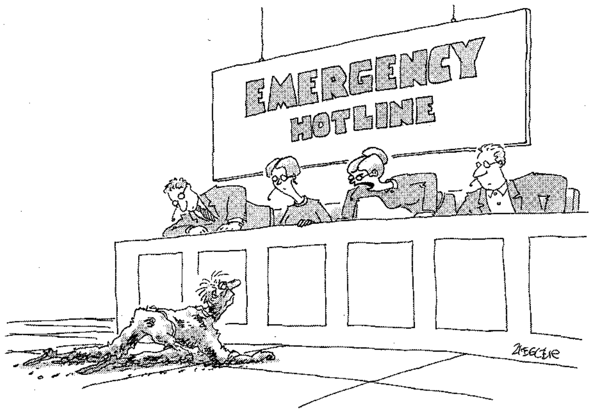
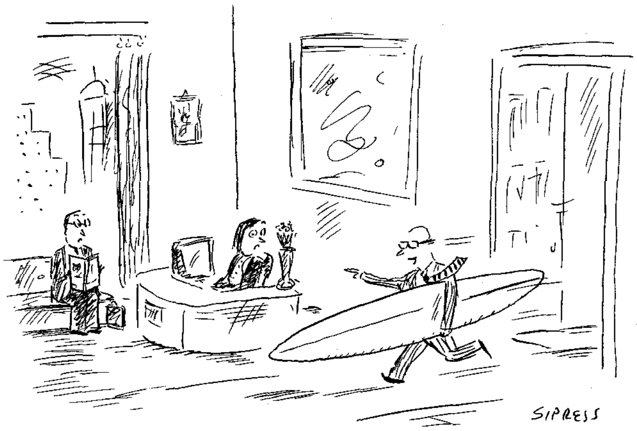
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, June 5th. Finalists in the May 23rd contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 27th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

WINNING CAPTION



"Neither the time nor the place, Doug!"
Miriam Steinberg, Cambridge, Mass.



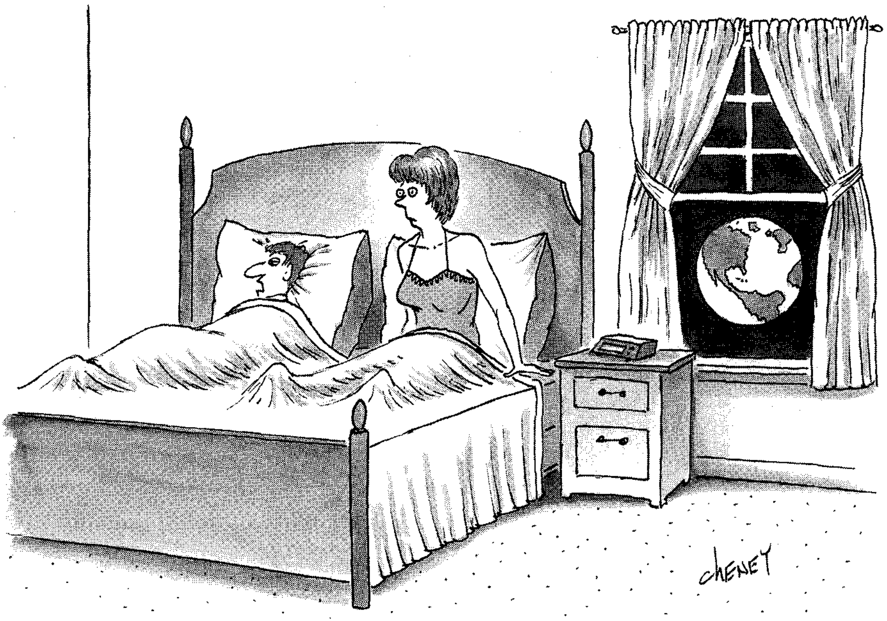
THE FINALISTS

"Tell my one-thirty things got way gnarly."
Eric Slade, Portland, Ore.

"Hold my calls, cancel my appointments, and find my Speedo!"
Mary L. Tabor, Washington, D.C.

"Gotta reschedule. Water-main break on Seventh!"
Lee Radsch, Summit, N.J.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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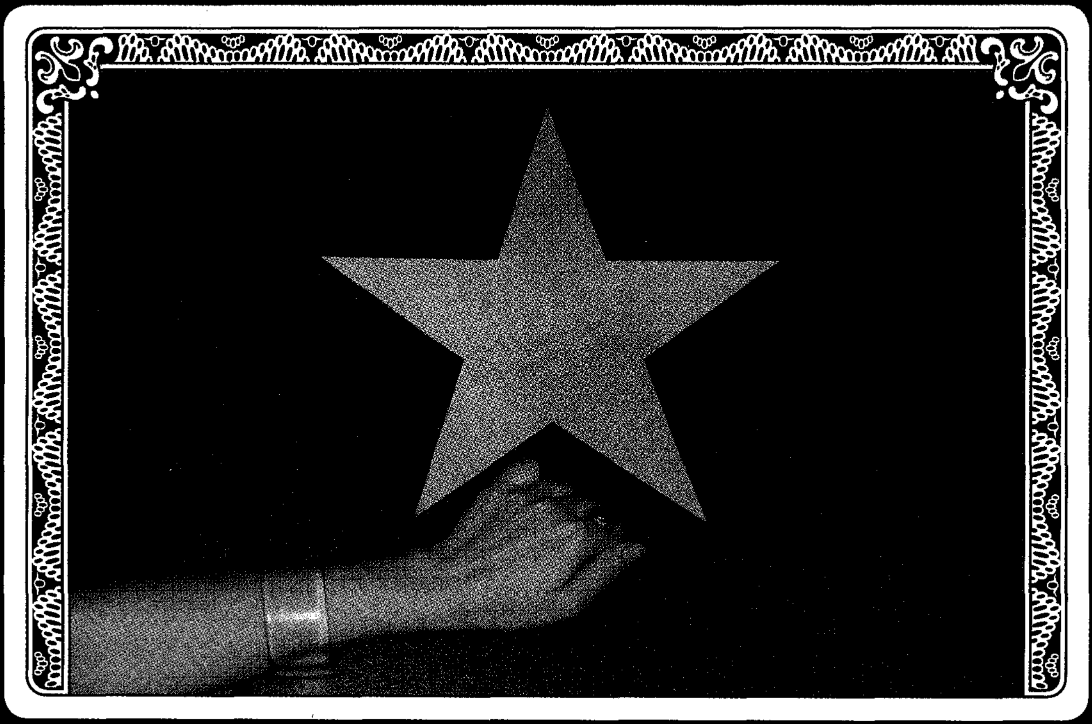

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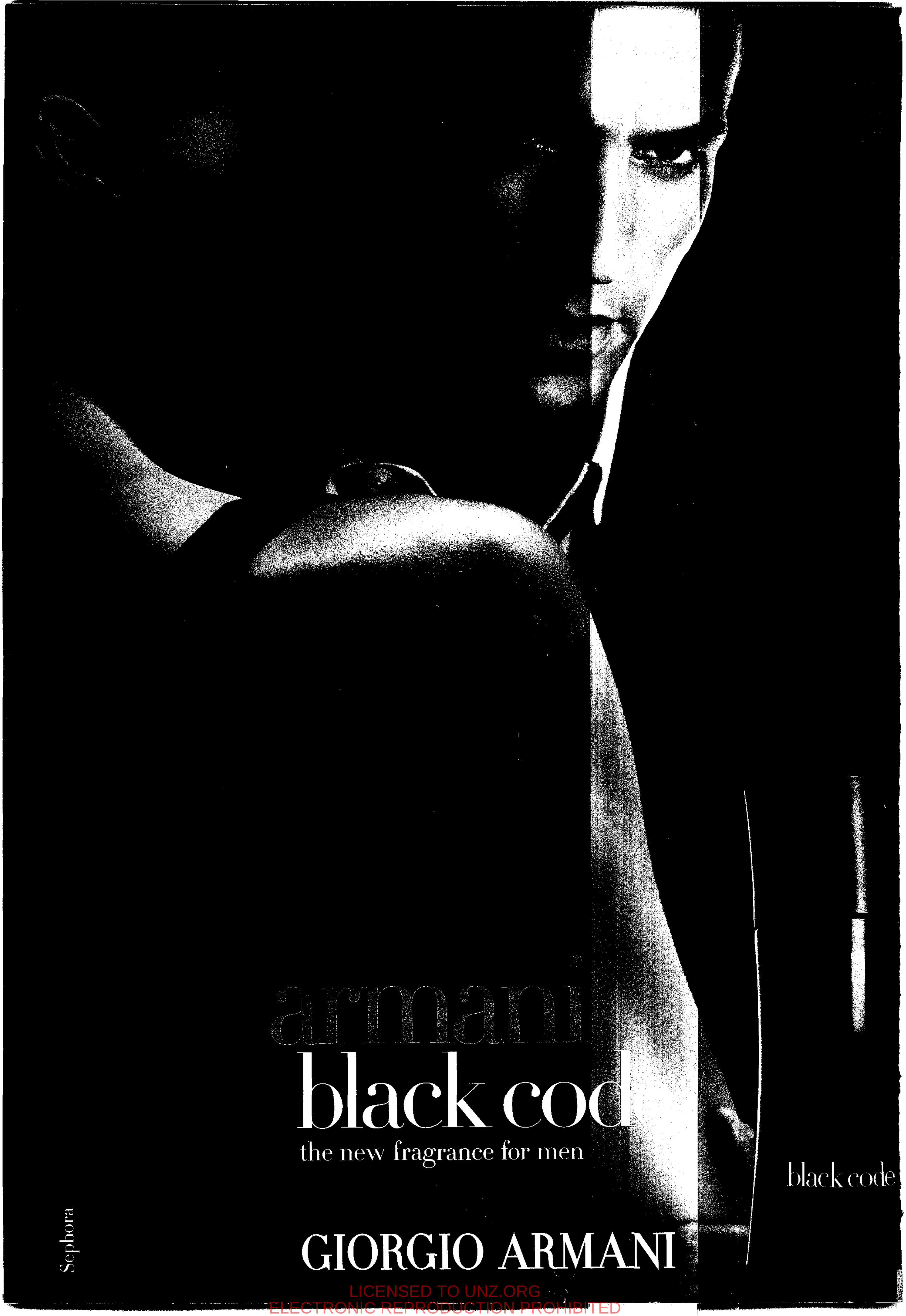
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